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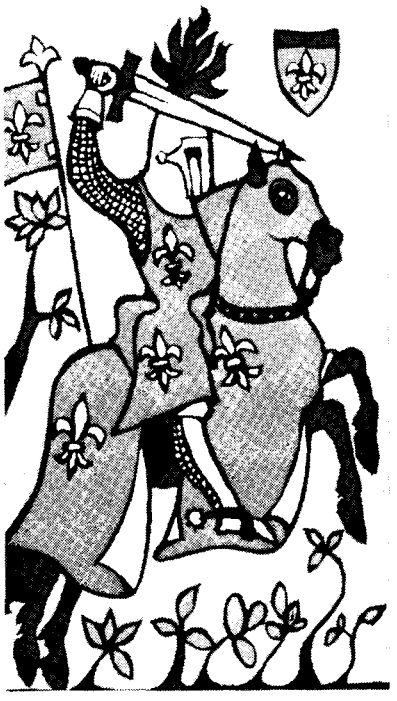

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Out of My Mind

Nuclear Research

Shooting the Pussycat

JEREMY BERNSTEIN

I spent the summer months of 1958 and 1959 in La Jolla, California, as a consultant for the then newly founded General Atomic Company. La Jolla was, and I suppose still is, a pleasantly sybaritic beach community with excellent surfing, done mostly on the Windan' sea Beach celebrated in Tom Wolfe's *Pump House Gang*. My connection with General Atomic came about because of my friendship with Freeman Dyson, who was, and still is, a professor at the Institute for Advanced Study, where I spent two years from 1957 to 1959. Dyson was invited in 1956 to be a consultant for General Atomic by its then president, Frederic de Hoffmann; sometime later, Dyson asked me to join him. (He has written about these years in his fascinating autobiography, *Disturbing the Universe*, published this past summer.) He arrived that summer, along with the rest of the consultants, at what he describes in his book as a "little red schoolhouse." De Hoffmann had, in fact, rented a schoolhouse that had been abandoned by the San Diego Public School system—since General Atomic then had no buildings of its own. By the time of my appearance the company had acquired its own buildings. But, buildings or not, in 1956 de Hoffmann, who was a tremendous entrepreneur, had managed to attract to La Jolla a stellar group of physicists, including Dyson, with the idea of the company's entering the field of reactor design and construction. Dyson notes in his book that three groups of consultants were formed under the rubrics Safe Reactor, Test Reactor, and Ship Reactor. The latter two were, respectively, a design for a reactor with a very high neutron flux, to be used for materials testing, and a design for a reactor to be used to power merchant ships. Neither of these was ever built by the company.

I recall that Dyson told me he got into the business of designing a safe reactor because no one else (except Edward Teller) in the group wanted to do it. To most of them it did not seem like a very glamorous problem, but Dyson, who is acknowledged to be one of the best problem solvers in physics, took it on as a challenge. In due course—a few weeks' time—he invented the general concept of the TRIGA, an acronym invented by de Hoffmann to stand for "Training, Research, and Isotopes, General Atomic." This reactor was designed for use, primarily at universities and large medical centers, in training students and for the production of short-lived, medically useful isotopes. It sold, according to Dyson, for $144,000 and, at last count, some sixty had been sold. In fact, he notes in his book, "It is one of the very few reactors that made money for the company which built it."

Before getting on to why I am bringing all of this up at the present time I should like to describe briefly in what way the TRIGA is a safe reactor. To explain this in a schematic way, let me first review how a reactor works. Reactors are powered by nuclear fission. In particular the so-called "fuel elements" of the common reactors consist of long, thin rods containing pellets of uranium that have been "enriched" so as to contain more of the fissionable isotope U^{235} than is normally found in nature. In nature more than 99 percent of the uranium is found in the U^{238} isotope,

✪ JEREMY BERNSTEIN is a professor of physics at Stevens Institute of Technology and a staff writer for *The New Yorker*. His latest book is *Mountain Passages*.

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which is not readily fissionable. In a TRIGA, for example, the fuel elements contain an enrichment of 20 percent of the U^{235} isotope. When a slow neutron encounters a U^{235} nucleus, it has a good chance of splitting it and releasing energy and additional neutrons which can then carry on the chain reaction that produces energy.

This brings me to the second point. If the neutrons are to be made effective, they must be slowed down. This is accomplished by putting the fuel rods in a so-called moderator. In the TRIGA, as in most of the common reactors, the moderator is ordinary water. The fuel elements are in a small swimming pool which glows a pleasant incandescent blue when the reactor is operating. The power generated by the TRIGA is so low that one can stand safely above the pool while the reactor is working. Reactors used by the power industry are at least ten thousand times more powerful, and one cannot approach them when they are in operation. The water in the pool serves the double function of slowing down the neutrons and cooling the fuel elements so they won't melt—the "melt-down." The fissions generate heat, and in a power reactor this heat produces steam, which drives electric turbines. In the power reactors the essential thing, from a safety point of view, is to make sure that under no circumstance does one lose cooling water and thus expose the heated fuel elements. We all know now, from what happened at Three Mile Island, how crucial this is. In power reactors the safety is "engineered." It consists of having many back-up cooling systems which the reactor engineers can bring to bear in an emergency. But, as we saw in the Three Mile Island incident, these safety measures are vulnerable to human error. It appears that the reactor operators there shut off the emergency cooling system at a crucial moment. The accident would have been prevented if they had done nothing and let the emergency system operate automatically.

What Teller's group—that is, Dyson—was up to was to create a reactor that was "intrinsically" safe: it would shut itself off no matter what anyone did during an emergency—simply as a law of nature. Dyson's brilliant idea was to design a reactor in such a way that half the moderator was the water and half was in the fuel elements themselves. The element that slows the neutrons in the water moderator is the hydrogen. Hence Dyson, working with an Iranian metallurgist, Massoud Simnad, and others found out how to bond uranium-hydride—a compound of uranium and hydrogen—to a metal compound of zirconium and hydrogen. In this way the fuel elements themselves contain hydrogen; when something goes wrong the hydrogen gets heated up and then, it turns out, it will no longer moderate the neutrons and the whole chain reaction will come to an abrupt stop. In fact, in a TRIGA the reactor shuts itself off in a *few thousandths of a second.* I have watched it do this myself in tests in which the control rods that usually keep the number of neutrons at a safe level were blown out of the reactor by compressed air. What one saw was a brief flash in the swimming pool and then nothing. (By the way, among the people who helped produce the final TRIGA design was Theodore B. Taylor, whose concern for nuclear safety was underscored in John McPhee's book *The Curve of Binding Energy.* Ted Taylor was our group leader at General Atomic when I joined Dyson there in 1958 to try to build an atom-bomb powered spaceship, the *Orion*—a project that was abandoned a few years later. But that is another story.)

Before I come to the point of *this* story I must make a few additional remarks about the safety of nuclear reactors. Prompt shutdown of the chain reaction that keeps a reactor going is unfortunately not the whole safety story. If it were, there would have been no serious incident at Three Mile Island since the operators there managed to shut the chain reaction off in about thirty seconds. Unlike other power sources a reactor continues to generate substantial heat even after the fuel stops "burning." The reason for this is that when the uranium nucleus splits in the fission process it splits into a variety of medium weight nuclei that are radioactive. These radioactive fission products continue to decay and the motion of the decay products represents energy that manifests itself as heat. The amount of heat that is generated depends on the prior history of how the reactor has been used, but a rough formula is that some 10 percent of the power capacity of the reactor remains as heat when the chain reaction is

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shut down. To have a clearer idea about the numbers, we may recall that the power of a reactor is usually given in watts—a unit of energy per second—an energy rate. How big is a watt? To get a feeling for this, recall that normal household light bulbs are usually about a hundred watts, which, coincidentally, is the energy rate that is dissipated by the human body. A clothes dryer consumes energy at a rate of about four thousand watts. But a big power reactor at full operation generates about a *billion* watts so that 10 percent of this is about a hundred million watts. When the reactor is shut down, as it was at Three Mile Island, this enormous heat energy must be dissipated if the reactor is not to melt down. It is useful to keep the scale of these numbers in mind in what follows.

Now to the point. As early as 1952, physicists and engineers at Columbia University in Manhattan recognized the need for a safe training reactor that could be operated in a university located within a big city. In 1958 the TRIGA became operational, and by 1963 Columbia had received both government funds and a construction permit from the then Atomic Energy Commission to buy and build a facility for a relatively small TRIGA. The design called for a 250,000-watt reactor. It was to have been run, for training purposes, about eight hours a week at *ten* watts. A few hours a week it would have been run at full power to make isotopes. In the most extreme situation any emergency shutdown would have generated about fifteen thousand watts—the power equivalent of four clothes dryers. This heat would not have been difficult to dissipate. From 1963 until the present, however, Columbia's TRIGA has been tied up in an endless round of litigation between the university and various concerned citizen groups. Finally, in June 1974, the Supreme Court upheld the validity of the original construction permit. In fact the reactor has been built, but it has never been fueled. Very recently the president of Columbia, William McGill, announced that it would *never* be fueled as long as he is president. He later announced that he would retire in 1980.

It seems to me that McGill's decision and his reason for it—which according to the *New York Times* were "not because of doubts about safety but because of community fears" ("I am much more concerned with the psychological explosion than I am about a nuclear explosion," he stated)—are another illustration of the fact that the energy crisis has so far succeeded in bringing out the worst in nearly everybody. Did it not occur to President McGill that the same reasoning he used to ban the TRIGA could be used to ban any controversial academic subject at Columbia? Did it not also occur to him that without training facilities nuclear engineers—both here and abroad—will be even less well equipped to deal with emergencies than the Three Mile Island engineers seem to have been? It should also be noted that no one, no anti-nuclear group, has asked that any of the other sixty-odd TRIGAs be shut down. This in itself is some sort of testimonial to their safety. Columbia's administration has adopted a Luddite position that is unique. It can be compared to General MacArthur's decision to smash the Japanese cyclotrons just after the war on the grounds that these machines were somehow weapons of war. No one can be complacent about nuclear safety after Three Mile Island. But to keep a TRIGA from operating is, as a Columbia professor remarked, like being in an Indian village where a man-eating tiger has been discovered and to respond to this genuine and legitimate concern by shooting someone's pet cat.

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The Ephemeral Verities

ARISTIDES

A few months back, as is most distinctly not my wont, I had lunch with an editor of *Playboy* magazine. I should like to be able to report that this man was a cunning erotician, that we dined in an elegant restaurant atop an expensive bordello where we were served by eunuchs, and that talk at nearby tables was of white slavery. Not quite so. As it turned out, my luncheon companion was much engrossed in the prospect of purchasing a condominium, and we ate in a restaurant whose custom seemed chiefly to come from that corporate class known, I believe, as middle management. Worse still, all that each of us ordered for lunch was a salad. Not my idea of playboys dining out, I must say.

I had come to this lunch because the editor had sent me a note saying he had read some of my scribblings and would like to discuss the possibility of my writing something for *Playboy*. I recall having heard, roughly a decade ago, that the magazine paid $3,000 for an article. Had it, I wondered, kept pace with inflation—as I, a domestic Keynesian with a talent for deficit financing, had not? In short, as the hunter said about the quail, I was game. I even had an answer for anyone who might reproach me by saying, "You mean you write for *Playboy*?" "You mean," I was prepared to shoot back, "you read it?"

But, as will appear in my annual report to stockholders, nothing came of this lunch. I neglected even to find out if *Playboy* had raised its payments to authors. What I did find out in talking to this editor was that I am not an ideal *Playboy* contributor, though he was too kind to say so. As we spoke about what I might write for the magazine, he mentioned that *Playboy* was planning a series of articles predicting trends in the 1980s. I allowed that, from the standpoint of a writer, I found the future boring, the present pleasant, and the past best of all. But as we talked further, it became clear to me that what he really wanted, what every editor of a contemporary mass magazine for the college-educated middle classes wants, is not a body of useful or curious information, or the spectacle of an idiosyncratic and perhaps interesting mind at work, but a piece of writing that will spot a trend, put a new phrase into the language, erect a new truth that will endure until the next issue of the magazine appears. What is wanted, if I may say so, is a shiny new cliché.

A new cliché? Isn't this a contradiction? As a near-contributor to *Playboy* I don't see why I should have to define my terms—especially at these prices—so, if it is all the same to you, I think I'll adopt the definition set forth by someone who has thought about clichés longer than I have. In *On Clichés* (Routledge and Kegan Paul), a most suggestive treatise, a Dutch sociologist named Anton C. Zijderveld defines a cliché thus:

> A cliché is a traditional form of human expression (in words, thoughts, emotions, gestures, acts) which—due to repetitive use in social life—has lost its original, often ingenious heuristic power. Although it thus fails positively to contribute meaning to social interactions and communication, it does function socially, since it manages to stimulate behavior (cognition, emotion, volition, action), while it avoids reflection on meanings.

This is a definition that doesn't, you might say, throw the baby out with the bathwater; it leaves no stone unturned while offering several blessings in disguise, and in the final analysis provides an acid test. You might say all this, that is, if you have an ear dead to the grossest of clichés. But two elements in Professor Zijderveld's definition are especially worth notice. The first is its capaciousness, which lies in its recognition that the clichéic can extend well beyond the merely linguistic.

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There are, after all, cliché acts, cliché thoughts, cliché books, possibly cliché lives. The second is that Professor Zijderveld's definition comprehends that clichés can stimulate behavior even while discouraging thought.

Still, new clichés? One tends to think of clichés as made stale by use and overuse. Yet, in a letter to Harriet Monroe, Wallace Stevens remarks, "There is, of course, a cliché of the moment as well as a cliché of the past." In *Human, All-Too-Human,* Nietzsche speaks of those who are fifteen minutes ahead of their time—persons of whom he did not think at all well. And I (if I may insert myself into such high-flown company) think there are things that ought to be called Ephemeral Verities, which are clichés of the moment and up to the moment, but without the staying power of ordinary clichés. To adapt the old cliché about Chinese restaurants, the trouble with Ephemeral Verities is that, an hour after you have mouthed them, you are empty-headed again.

There is nothing new about clichés as such. As an appendix to *Bouvard and Péchet,* Flaubert included a "Dictionnaire des idées reçues," later enlarged, in my translated copy, into *A Dictionary of Platitudes, Being a Compendium of Conversational Clichés, Blind Beliefs, Fashionable Misconceptions, and Fixed Ideas.* Flaubert intended his *Dictionary* to contain "everything that it is necessary to repeat in society in order to pass for a well-mannered and agreeable person." Befitting a book devoted to the cultivation of the commonplace, long stretches of the *Dictionary* are tedious, though every now and again a small nugget flashes. The proper cliché to mouth about Catholicism, for example, is "Has had a very beneficial influence on the arts"; the advice on the subject of Metaphysics is "To laugh at it is proof of a superior mind"; and, as for Memory, "Complain about your own, and even boast about having none. But roar when told you have no judgment."

I myself do not despise all clichés. Some of them usefully relieve life of its complications. The fully examined life, I have come to think, may not be worth living. Into each life a lot of cliché must fall. It may be a sign of maturity to accept this, smile, and pass on. Of the young Lytton Strachey, Max Beerbohm wrote that his prose had not a jot of preciosity. "He makes no attempt to dazzle," Beerbohm writes. "He is not even afraid of clichés." One of the finest obituaries I have ever read, that of the extraordinary Baroness Moura Budberg, which appeared in *The Times* (of London), ended flat dab and altogether correctly on a cliché: "There is an old American saying that fits her well: 'After they made that one, they broke the mould.' "

One can only begin to lay claim to knowing a foreign language, it has been said, when one can spot clichés in it. H. W. Fowler, in his article on the cliché in *Modern English Usage,* remarks, "What is new is not necessarily better than what is old; the original felicity that made a phrase a cliché may not be beyond recapture." Well to remember, too, that clichés often become in time the inevitable burial ground of even the most strikingly original phrase or thought or gesture; perhaps the more striking the more inevitably will it end as a cliché. "And the witty gentleman," says Fowler, in his article on hackneyed phrases, "who equipped coincidence with her long arm has doubtless suffered even in this life at seeing that arm so mercilessly overworked."

Some activities are quite unthinkable unembellished by clichés, and clichés can sometimes gently slide into tradition. For the sports fan, clichés are nearly as important to spectatorial pleasure as are statistics; the best contemporary writer on the subject of baseball, Roger Angell, is especially adept at carefully deploying clichés throughout his compositions. Certain events call for the clichéic: who wants veal limone for Thanksgiving dinner? Clichés can help us get through awkward situations; they keep things superficial where skimming the surface may be the wisest course. In *On Clichés* Professor Zijderveld notes: "In fact, if one were to collect clichés, like stamps or jokes, one would find a rich field of exploration in obituaries, in letters of condolence, and in funeral orations. It seems as if variations are deemed uncouth, or almost magically harmful and hazardous. Indeed, by leaving the set of clichés in such precarious situations one may easily hurt feelings inadvertently." Each of us, in short, has to be ready to call upon the Polonius that is part of us all.

But a little cliché goes a long way. The way

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things stand now, though, under the dispensation of the Ephemeral Verities, a great many clichés are asked to go a short way. We are today, I believe, being bombarded, indeed blitzed, by clichés. Professor Zijderveld maintains that modern society is especially susceptible to clichés—"clichégenic," he calls it, in a word that gets to look less hideous once one gets used to it—for the reason that, where meaning has in so many places been undermined, men and women swim about in choppy waters, desperately reaching out for something to keep themselves afloat. "Clichés," Professor Zijderveld writes, give "artificial clarity, stability, and certainty." While he is not in favor of this, nor of the clichéic as a mode of thought, he does think it is better than nothing. I am inclined to believe it is about the same as nothing.

Clichés are sometimes thought of as wisdom gone stale. But just as often they represent the devastation that time can wreak on serious ideas. Take the phrase "Protestant ethic," surely one of the leading clichés of our time. Nowadays it pops up everywhere, with a range of meanings that vary from the description of a person intent on success to a tag for the compulsion to work unrelentingly. The origin of this contemporary cliché is, of course, Max Weber's magnificent essay, "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism," which I first read some twenty years ago as an undergraduate in a condition I can only describe as one of intellectual heat—so swept up was I by its learning, its subtlety, its power. Having read the essay, I now wince slightly when I hear, say, Jimmy Carter described as a product of the Protestant ethic. But then perhaps he is, in the sense that, say, Dick Cavett is a real Renaissance man.

Max Weber's phrase took some seventy-five years to lapse into cliché status, but usually the process by which thought turns to cliché is much more rapid. Indeed certain notions or phrases seem to come into the world as full-blown clichés. Joseph Kraft's "Middle America," Henry Fairlie's "establishment," Spiro Agnew's speech writer's "silent majority," and, on a somewhat higher level, Erik Erikson's "identity crisis"—these seem clichés almost out of the gate. What makes them so, I think, is that each of these alluring phrases is nonetheless finely inexact, fuzzy enough to be put to multiple uses, and exquisitely suited to what Santayana called "the habit of abbreviated thinking." Consider: "The silent majority, freshly emergent as Middle America, no longer feels an identity crisis vis-à-vis the establishment." There is something gratifying about striking off such a sentence—even though it is, of course, utter nonsense.

The rise of the Ephemeral Verities has been nicely attuned to, if not abetted by, the rise in the numbers of people who have attended college since World War II. Current undergraduate education seems splendidly set up for the transmission of clichés. Many college courses today are very with-it, are taught by teachers whose eyes are blurry from spotting trends, and use books that are themselves largely composed of clichés: *Future Shock*, *The Best and the Brightest*, *Passages*. Students themselves are very keen at discerning the cliché possibilities in their education, and a few years ago (I do not know if the phrase is still current) used to speak of the clichéic distillation of complex thought as "cepts"—cepts being short for concepts. "Oedipus complex," "categorical imperative," Emerson's "Oversoul," "marginal utility," Nietzsche's "Superman," "alienation"—such are cepts. Some days, listening to these cepts pinging off classroom walls, it seems as if the chief effect of the spread of education has been to allow more people to live, not more thoughtfully, but by somewhat more complicated clichés.

If undergraduate education often spreads the fertilizer for the implantation of clichés, the great harvest is yielded in newspapers, in news magazines, and on television. The media are the largest users of clichés, and they require, like certain large-scale discount houses (since they discount ideas), a fast turnover. There is all that space to fill, all that time to kill, and what better way to do it than with clichés: about people, about politics, about social problems. Having myself once committed a book on a social problem, the lugubrious one of divorce, I was often invited to write for women's magazines about different aspects of this dreary topic—or to go on obscure radio and television talk shows to parade my rather tired opinions. It was my big chance to set myself up as a false expert, a cliché merchant, the Divorce Man, a figure

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akin to the anti-ERA lady and the touring transsexual. I demurred.

I recall one such invitation that came long after my book on the subject had been safely "pulped" (publishers go in for strong verbs). I was invited by a small downtown FM station to take part in a discussion with a divorce lawyer and an aggrieved divorcée. Since this conversation was scheduled for midnight, I gathered it was staged for the delectation of insomniacs, folks coming off the night shift, and driving drunks. No fee was offered, and I should mention that one does not travel downtown at midnight in my city without a U.S. Cavalry escort.

"Now let me get this straight," I said to the enthusiastic man who ran the show. "You want me to appear at twelve A.M. to talk with a very angry woman and a lawyer with a reputation for being a sharper—and to do this for the sheer pleasure of talking about a hideously sad subject."

"Yep."

"Well, sir, my answer is an unalterable and implacable no. What possible point can there be to my coming down there at midnight, at risk to my life and without pay, except to add to the contemporary noise?"

A moment's silence on his side, and then, "Hey, how would you like to come on the show to discuss that?"

"To discuss what?"

"Why, the contemporary noise!"

Indefatigable!

If the contemporary noise has not yet made it as popular cliché, two items that are especially cliché-prone continue to be those of decades and of generations. "Yours is a lost generation," Gertrude Stein is supposed to have remarked to Ernest Hemingway (I have always suspected she said a *louche gération*), and ever since no generation has been allowed to pass without a label: the Depression generation, the silent generation, the Woodstock generation, et cetera. But even more persistent is the penchant for clichés about decades. Here is a recent offering from the pages of the *New Republic*:

> It is becoming increasingly clear with the approaching end of the aimless 1970s, a decade so reminiscent of the 1950s and 1920s, that American politics is in for another of its periodic sea changes: ready or not, a more energetic public life looms before us in the 1980s.

I myself am not ready; I am not even ready for the analogy between the 1970s and the 1920s, having only recently become accustomed to that between the 1960s and the 1920s. But these clichés change quickly, which is what makes them, as verities, only ephemeral. Attend now, though, to that old cliché-meister the Reverend Norman Vincent Mailer, in an interview in *Publishers Weekly*: "The '70s have been too much for me. They appalled me the way the '50s appalled me." As one good cliché deserves another, Mailer caps his with an empty chiasmus: "I used to hate America for what it was doing to all of us. Now I hate all of us for what we're doing to America."

The cliché seal was set on the just-ending decade, long before its completion, by Tom Wolfe, who called it the "Me Decade." The 1970s, in Mr. Wolfe's reading, was a decade given over to the self—to self-improvement programs, religious and therapeutic, to self-exhibition, and to self-absorption generally. When Tom Wolfe sent the Me Decade up the flagpole, nearly everyone, it seems, saluted. These boys, to adopt another advertising cliché, certainly know how to pick up the ball and run with it. Suddenly, everywhere one turned, the 1970s were all Me and narcissistic and dreadfully spineless. A young writer named Mark Crispin Miller remarked that those years have been "hospitable to narcissism." Michael Harrington, a fellow keen for political activism, referred to "the passive 1970s." Christopher Lasch published a collection of essays entitled *The Culture of Narcissism*, which turned out to be a best-seller. And then, at midyear of 1979, Jann Wenner, the publisher of *Rolling Stone* and hence presumably a careful reader of the Zeitgeist, announced that "The Me Decade is over."

But before the decade congeals into the plaster of paris of cliché, I think that a few things ought to be said on behalf of the 1970s—not least among them that they weren't the 1960s. Properly speaking, of course, the 1960s were not the '60s exclusively; insofar as they stand for a period of political tumult and intellectual incivility, they continued on well into the early 1970s. What is more, in what decade without a ma-

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jor war or economic catastrophe have people *not* been self-absorbed? The labeling of decades often tells less about the decades than about strangely skewed views of history. A period such as the 1960s, when our nation was very nearly ripped apart by riot and ill feeling all around, is now known as one of social idealism. Another decade, such as the middle and late 1950s under President Eisenhower, and after Korea and Senator Joseph McCarthy—a time when people could carry on their work—is known as passive and conformist and boring. The fact is, I don't see me in the Me Decade. I would, however, if people who insist on a label for the 1970s settle for calling it the You Decade.

Not that all this talk of decades is entirely wrong. Many people who came of age in the 1920s, when Prohibition was in force, seem never to have lost their excitement about alcohol. Many people who were young in the 1930s have never quite been able, owing to the Depression, to shake their anxiety about money. And many people who came of age in the 1960s are likely to have a wide acquaintance with drugs. I am not sure, though, that one can safely say much more than these loose and banal things about any ten-year period. Yet people seem to crave more. Labels for decades help them pack up the complications of history and even of their own lives, and put these away in the empty valise of clichés. Once packed up, thinking can cease. Here is the real utility of clichés: they explain the world, usually crudely and sometimes quite falsely. But for many people a false explanation is better than no explanation at all.

So great is the need for explanations that certain thinkers gain ascendancy over others because, intricate and elaborate though their thought might originally have been, it presents a rich mine from which clichés can be easily extracted. Marxism is a prime example, with its two whomping clichés: the eternal class struggle and economic determinism. Freudianism is another example. Perhaps as few people have read Freud as have read Marx, yet everyone is in on the id, ego, superego, the determinism of early infancy, the importance of the sexual life, and the rest of it. Existentialism has been yet another fountain of clichés, so much so that the very word "existential" has itself become a cliché—one of the true wooden nickels of intellectual discourse. Professor Zijderveld remarks of such intellectual clichés that they "are like mantras providing modern man with a semi-magical sense of security and stability . . . in which permanent reflection can come to rest."

The fact that all these items, from the class struggle to the Oedipus complex, have become clichés does not necessarily disqualify them as truth-bearing. Ideas, like statistics, cannot be held responsible for the people who use them. Yet some ideas do allow easier access, and coarser usage, than others. Finer grained writers—Montaigne, Pascal, Santayana—are not so easily summarized. Their thought cannot be grasped by the reins of a leading idea or two; rather like poets, they can scarcely be paraphrased. Marx and Freud are writers of great power in any case, but surely a large part of their popularity is owing to their supreme nomenclatural skill. They could name things with cogency, and this cogency is decisive for the adaptation of ideas to use as clichés. "Just another example of thinking that if you name something you've explained it," says the protagonist of Kingsley Amis's novel *Jake's Thing*. "Like . . . like permissive society."

The permissive society, the consumer society, post-industrial society, the meritocratic society, the culture of narcissism, the culture of poverty, the adversary culture, the organization man, the lonely crowd, the Spock generation—there seems to be no end to these clichés, these Ephemeral Verities. Nor to ephemeral veritists, those philosophes who sail in on a phrase—Norman O. Brown ("polymorphous perverse"), Marshall McLuhan ("the medium is the message"), Herbert Marcuse ("repressive toleration")—and sail out again. Perhaps some day they will be used as names in an intellectual trivia game, like Monopoly, let's call it Doctorate. Pick a question card: "Who in the late 1960s said that in an insane society the most truly sane person was the schizophrenic?" Answer: the English psychiatrist R. D. Laing. If you answered incorrectly, return to another year as a teaching assistant at Eastern Illinois University. If you answered correctly, take credit for two master's degree courses, and apply to Columbia.

Marcuse and McLuhan, Brown and Laing, these are very great geysers of pishposh, as Mencken used to call such temporary sages,

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and very high-blowing ones at that. Their writings are scarcely accessible to the common reader, and even the uncommon reader needs a fairly broad streak of masochism and the mental equivalent of hip boots to trudge through their works. But if these ephemeral veritists are an acquired taste, like that for eating cactus, who is working the larger crowds—what in Las Vegas are called the "big rooms"?

One night not long ago when I was watching the local television news, a suburban high school teachers' strike was reported. Various teachers were asked how the strike would affect them personally. One of the respondents was a man with hairdo and mustache reminiscent of Kurt Vonnegut. "I was forty last month," he said into the microphone thrust under his mustache, "and this summer my wife and I separated, and now there's this strike. One more thing and I'll be going through a mid-life crisis." It took me a moment to realize what he was saying: here was a reader of, and apparently a true believer in, *Passages.*

Passages is a book about adult development by the journalist Gail Sheehy. Among ephemeral veritists, Miss Sheehy works the lower end of the vineyard. The air is not so rarefied down there, but the yield is much greater; *Passages* has been, as its mass paperback edition announces, "#1 from Coast to Coast." I have read only a hundred or so of its more than five hundred pages, but that is enough to recognize that, of its kind, the book is a work of genius—a structure built almost entirely of other people's clichés, though chiefly using materials from those two great brickyards of contemporary cliché, psychology and sociology. Miss Sheehy artfully uses jargon, supplies endless case-study interviews, exudes an air of scientism, and paints over the whole with a rich coat of hopefulness. "If I've been convinced by one idea in the course of collecting all the life stories that inform this book, it is this: Times of crisis, of disruption or constructive change, are not only predictable but desirable. They mean growth." Hmmm. Do try to remember that the next time you undergo bankruptcy, divorce, a coronary, or the death of someone you love: it means growth.

But all this is old news. Miss Sheehy has now moved on to fresh verities. *Esquire* has recently run a segment from a forthcoming book of hers; the segment is entitled "Introducing the Postponing Generation, the Truth About Today's Young Men." Ah, "the Postponing Generation"—who can fail to find the deft touch of the cliché artist in that, a woman with a sure sense of *le cliché juste*? One can be reasonably certain that there is plenty more where that came from.

Professor Zijderveld makes the interesting observation that intellectual clichés do not demand any serious moral responsibility. One adopts them for a while, wearing them rather like a sweater. When something warmer or more attractive comes along, one switches to that. A continual shedding and changing of clichés, like sweaters, goes on and doubtless will continue to do so. One can attempt to beat back these clichés, but in the end the task can never be successfully completed, for it too closely resembles cleaning out the Augean stables without removing the horses.

Besides, the process has been going on for a very long while. Dostoevski, in the early pages of *The Diary of Writer*, remarks, "In our day, thoughtfulness is next to impossible: it is too expensive a luxury. True enough, ready ideas are being bought. They are being sold everywhere, even gratis, but gratuitously, in the long run, they prove more expensive, and people begin to forbode this fact." Nearly seventy years later, Wallace Stevens, in more than one of his letters, notes that he is reading too much and, as a result, thinking too little. One might once have thought of reading as indistinguishable from thinking, but no longer. With so many clichés buzzing about in books and in the atmosphere generally, it is sometimes like trying to think with one's head in a beehive.

Meanwhile, should another *Playboy* or other slick magazine editor invite me to lunch, I will not again make the mistake of arriving unprepared. I have an idea for an article that will, I think, fill the bill. Its working title is "The New Incest." Interested editors may contact my agent, Georges Borchardt, Inc., New York, New York. I have also begun work on an article that will explain what happened in the 1990s. Editors should know in advance that for either of these articles the highest possible rates will be barely acceptable.

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Never Speculate, Never Explain

The State of Contemporary Philosophy

KENNETH R. SEESKIN

ALTHOUGH THE NUMBER OF JOURNALS has never been greater and the flyers announcing new conferences, colloquia, and societies never as ambitious, it is no secret that something is wrong with philosophy in the English-speaking world. The advances made by Russell, Whitehead, Wittgenstein, and Husserl are now studied by historians, and the boldness which characterized their age, roughly from 1900 to 1950, has given way to a spirit of caution, qualification, and retreat. This is not to say that talented people no longer study philosophy, nor that worthwhile contributions have ceased. Promising work is being done, but too often it is overwhelmed by pettifogging or left to die in obscurity.

Those unaware of what is happening in philosophy today may be surprised to learn that few academic philosophers address the sort of problems one studied in college: death, the existence of God, the cardinal virtues, the external world, or the prospects for happiness. Instead, if one walks into a classroom or lecture hall, one is likely to find brief discussions dealing with an odd assortment of issues about such things as time machines, adverbs, pains, possible worlds, sexual perversion. Even the language has changed. In many cases, English prose has been replaced by codes, symbols, and dialects incomprehensible to those outside the profession and not much better known to some of those inside.

I

It is not altogether surprising that philosophy has fallen on hard times. Throughout much of this century, people believed that philosophical questions were the result of logical or linguistic confusions. The task of philosophy was to eliminate them and thereby do away with itself. Wittgenstein once said that the philosopher's treatment of a question is

KENNETH R. SEESKIN teaches philosophy at Northwestern University. He is currently at work on a book about the problem of evil.

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like the treatment of an illness. What, then, does the philosopher do when the patient is no longer sick?

The problem is that philosophy is unique among academic disciplines in that the philosopher is forever plagued by the question of what his discipline is about. Isaiah Berlin recently remarked that one of the hallmarks of a philosophical question is that a person does not automatically know where to look for the answer. A beginning student is usually told that philosophy does not deal with facts but with the analysis of concepts. But this characterization is inadequate because it seems to suggest that the distinction between the factual and the conceptual is absolute and that concepts can be analyzed entirely on their own. The philosopher, in other words, need not bother with what is, has been, or is likely to be the case.

What emerges is a conception of philosophy that retains its purity by making a radical distinction between itself and virtually every other form of knowledge. C. D. Broad once described philosophy at Cambridge as "almost completely out of touch with general history, with political theory and sociology, and with jurisprudence." Few eyebrows would have been raised if he had thrown in a dozen other departments and perhaps three or four additional disciplines as well. As for how it is possible to do, say, ethics in such an environment, Broad and his cohorts had a ready answer: the moral philosopher must be distinguished from the moralist. The latter takes a stand on important ethical questions and can be refuted should his evidence prove insufficient. For him to be ignorant of history, political theory, and jurisprudence is to run the risk of being wrong. The moral philosopher, however, only reflects on the language employed by the moralist. Since the philosopher is not in the business of recommending or criticizing courses of action, he can comfortably ignore the lessons the moralist has to learn.

This conception of philosophy prevailed in the English-speaking world for about forty years until it fell into disrepute during the turmoil of the sixties. Then sticky questions began to be asked: To whom was such analysis addressed and for what purpose? If the moral philosopher had studied the great ethical systems of the past, why should he not bring his knowledge to bear on the controversial issues of the present? Recently a number of articles have sprung up in the philosophical journals dealing with abortion, homosexuality, recombinant DNA research, intelligence testing, and other issues once thought to be beyond the scope of philosophical inquiry. Their presence raises the obvious question: What unique subject or set of problems distinguishes philosophical inquiry from everything else?

For a sizable group of young contemporary philosophers the answer

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is: none. Philosophy in this view becomes any general discussion of an ever-increasing number of subjects, provided only that the participants acknowledge a minimal degree of continuity with such precursors as Plato, Aristotle, Kant, and Mill. What philosophers study are the works of people who have interesting observations about "things in general." Richard Rorty, writing in the *Yale Review* in 1976, described this view as follows:

> Philosophy as synoptic vision is obviously not the province of a single academic discipline. If one lists all the various people who usually count as "philosophers" (e.g., those whose names might turn up on examinations for the Ph.D. in philosophy), a random sample might include Heraclitus, Abelard, Spinoza, Marx, Kierkegaard, Frege, Kurt Gödel, Dewey, and Austin. Nobody would claim that there was a common subject, the study of which set these men apart from (say) Euripides, the pseudo-Dionysius, Montaigne, Newton, Samuel Johnson, Leopold von Ranke, Stendhal, Thomas Huxley, Edmund Wilson, and Yeats. The topics and authors which fall under the care of philosophy departments form a largely accidental, and quite temporary, hodgepodge—determined mostly by the accidents of power struggles within universities and by current fashions.

Because philosophy has trouble saying what it is about, it also has trouble assessing its past accomplishments. Such disciplines as science, history, and mathematics culminate in a body of accepted beliefs which constitute a large part of our knowledge of the world. But it would be hard to find any accepted beliefs that originated with philosophy. In the eighteenth century, Kant asserted that it was scandalous that philosophy still had no adequate proof for the existence of the external world. In the twentieth century, the scandal remains.

The history of philosophy indicates that it has been losing practitioners at a steady rate. Once physics was a part of philosophy, but around the time of Galileo it broke the umbilical cord and went about the world on its own. So, too, in turn, did chemistry, astronomy, biology, economics, psychology, and linguistics. As each of these subjects gained its independence, philosophy gave ground. Might the distinguishing feature of *this* century be that the process is nearly complete—that the last child has been born and the mother is ready to die of exhaustion?

One difficulty is that while other disciplines investigate a specific range of phenomena, philosophy, particularly in the hodgepodge conception of it, investigates all of existence. Worse, while the natural sciences seem to get better as they get older, philosophy does not. Without a body of accepted beliefs to build on, philosophers can make interesting points, but not step-by-step progress. A researcher in physics does not have to make a new beginning each time he walks into his lab; he can assume that there is a consensus on a large number of issues and thus can

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direct his efforts to a few highly restricted problems. Since philosophy prides itself on taking nothing for granted, it begins anew almost every time. No one would question whether physics has come a long way since Aristotle. Philosophy, however, may be no closer to a satisfactory description of the world now than it was in Aristotle's day.

Mindful of these considerations, some have argued that philosophy's only salvation is to become a quasi science itself. As early as 1914, Bertrand Russell put the cards on the table.

> It is my belief that the ethical and religious motives, in spite of the splendidly imaginative systems to which they have given rise, have been on the whole a hindrance to the progress of philosophy, and ought now to be consciously thrust aside by those who wish to discover philosophical truth. Science, originally, was entangled in similar motives, and was thereby hindered in its advances. It is, I maintain, from science, rather than from ethics and religion, that philosophy should draw its inspiration.

Russell's words were in many ways prophetic. Since 1914, much of Anglo-American philosophy has indeed looked to science for its inspiration. By 1969, W. V. O. Quine had altogether rejected the notion of "first philosophy"—arguing, for example, that epistemology is nothing but science self-applied, in particular the science of biology self-applied.

Since, to some, traditional philosophy never will amount to anything more than worthless speculation, perhaps we should alter our conceptions of what philosophy itself is. To continue in the same old way is to make the philosophy department a breeding ground for undisciplined thinking and to make the career of the philosopher scandalously unprofessional. After all, when it comes to answering the unanswerable, is not everyone an amateur? How much more respectable for the philosopher to imitate the scientist and become what William Earle has termed a "philosophical worker." In other words, for philosophy to prosper, what is needed are teams of people in fundamental agreement with one another making steady progress on narrowly conceived questions. Enter the technical article and its unique vocabulary.

To many philosophers this century will be best known for the rise of "systematic" philosophy, or logical analysis: a movement which uses the methods of formal logic to explicate such concepts as tense, modality, entailment, reference, and predication. The originators of logical analysis were Frege, Russell, and the early Wittgenstein, while some of its notable recent practitioners are Donald Davidson, Gilbert H. Harman, K. J. Hintikka, David Kaplan, Saul Kripke, David Lewis, and Richard Montague. Few would deny that since World War II, progress in logical analysis—particularly that part of it touching on semantics—has been

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rapid and, on occasion, even spectacular. Before Frege and Russell, semantics was a branch of armchair psychology or speculative metaphysics; now it is a highly developed field in its own right with a technical vocabulary and rigorous standards of proof. In general, logical analysis gives no attention to problems that do not admit precise solutions, and very little effort is expended on saying something interesting about "things in general." What Russell imagined in 1914—a philosophy unencumbered by ethical or religious freight—has come to pass, at least for this group of people.

Yet the rapid success of logical analysis raises the question of whether it is philosophy at all or whether it has become an autonomous discipline—the last in a long line of children to break the umbilical cord—which has closer ties to linguistics and computer theory than to Plato, Descartes, Kant, Hegel, or Kierkegaard. Articles on logical analysis cite contemporary linguists more often and with considerably more authority than they cite the great philosophers. Some institutions have begun to ask whether instruction in the "greats" of philosophy should be de-emphasized on the ground that there is not sufficient time both to train someone in logical semantics *and* expect him to master texts such as Plato's *Republic* and Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. More than one person has by now earned a Ph.D. in philosophy without having been compelled to give a close reading to either.

The time has come for moving logic out of the building which houses philosophy and into a new stainless steel structure of its own. Many logicians oppose this idea, much as a child might resist leaving his parents even though he has come of age. But in saying that logic is no longer a branch of philosophy one is not casting doubt on its accomplishments, but rather elevating them to the status they finally deserve after some two thousand years of speculation. At present, logic is a member in good standing of that group of subjects from which the last traces of amateurism have been removed.

Unfortunately, the dazzling success of logic has made a great deal of traditional philosophy suspect. Today formal methods are in evidence not only in areas where they are appropriate but in areas where they clearly are not. Many philosophers feel that their work, to get published, must have the look of scientific research. In many philosophical journals instead of saying "then" and "now," one must say "at time T_1" and "at time T_2"; instead of "People make mistakes," one must say "For all x such that x is a person, x makes mistakes"; and instead of "The argument is valid," one must say "Propositions (18)–(23) are valid," even though everyone has forgotten which propositions these are. Two examples of

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this tendency follow, both taken from journals which purport to be of general interest to the profession:

But from (15) and the fact that W includes A it follows that (19) is false. So GC does not include GT; so $GC\&\overline{GT}$ is possible. But W includes GT; *hence* $\overline{GT}$ includes $\overline{W}$; hence $GC\&\overline{GT}$ includes $\overline{W}$; and from this together with the possibility of $GC\&\overline{GT}$ it follows that (18) is false. The same goes for (17): since GT includes GC, (17) is true if and only if (19) is; but (since W includes A) if (15) is true, (19) is not.

—*Journal of Philosophy*, October 1973

The Quinean psychophysicist P_1 is to find a physiological state Φ that bears ECC to—what? By (I) of section 3 the element of the converse domain of ECC that is chosen will depend in part on the manual of translation in use; suppose now that P_1's manual M_1 translates (I) homophonically. P_1 is then to find the Φ that bears ECC to x's having a headache. Now P_1 identifies headache with certain physiological states Φ_1 of x, and by QMB explains x's behaviour by reference to these. Let us also explicitly assume that M_1 conforms to all translational evidence (an infinite totality) admitted by Quine. P_1 could not know that it does; but it does.

—*Mind*, July 1977

The question here is not whether true philosophy inevitably loses something when written in the form of a short, highly technical research paper. It does—almost invariably. But the larger question is, What has become of the irony of Socrates, the simple elegance of Descartes, the subtle wit of Hume, or the brilliant sarcasm of Wittgenstein—of all, in short, that once made philosophy majestic among human studies?

II

Philosophy as we know it was begun by an amateur in an age when worldly airs and rhetorical sophistication were very much in demand. I refer of course to Socrates and fifth-century Athens. After studying physics in the school of Anaxagoras and semantics with Prodicus, Socrates became dissatisfied with both—the former because it neglected moral and aesthetic questions, the latter presumably because he felt one cannot do philosophy by reading a dictionary. At his trial, Socrates shocked the jurors by proclaiming his ignorance. Unlike his predecessors from Asia Minor or southern Italy, he could not justify his life by taking pride in what he had contributed to the sum total of human knowledge, since, by his own admission, he had contributed nothing. His only justification was to compare himself to a gadfly. The city of Athens was like a large horse given to laziness; it was Socrates' job to rouse it from time to time by

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stinging it into activity. Hence the first great philosopher in the West was known primarily as a troublemaker and a busybody.

Socrates can be viewed as a hero only to the extent that one distinguishes the goals of the philosopher from those of the scientist. The scientist hopes to arrive at conclusions so well established that they become part of the body of accepted beliefs which, from that point on, can be taken for granted. Socrates' mission was just the opposite: to cast suspicion on accepted beliefs and replace the certainty of established fact with the troublesome insecurity of philosophical doubt. To be sure, some figures in the history of philosophy have viewed their work quite differently—along the lines of a rigorous science—but this is not the Socratic conception of philosophy, nor the one which is likely to put an end to the current malaise.

Philosophy tends to thrive during periods of intellectual disorder and heterodoxy. It is no accident, therefore, that many philosophers have rejected straight expository prose as a medium of expression and have chosen aphorisms, autobiographies, dialogues, plays, poetry, myths, meditations, or dialectical arguments instead. In the last hundred years alone, the works of Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and Sartre defy easy classification. Perhaps the only thing they have in common is that none is demonstrative in the usual sense of the term. They do not culminate in a body of provable theorems, but in perspectives which allow us to see the world in new ways. There have been philosophers whose works are expository or demonstrative in the standard ways. It is noteworthy, however, that idiosyncrasies which are welcome in philosophy would be unthinkable in science, where novel questions and disturbing revelations can be the beginning, but never the end, of the intellectual process.

In a sense the citizens of Athens were right: the philosopher is a criminal. If the scientist adds to our knowledge of the world, the philosopher, by casting doubt on the foundations which support that knowledge and pointing the way to radically new alternatives, takes away from it. To the charge that what he is doing is scandalous the philosopher has no defense. Thus each time a new discipline severs its connections with philosophy in order to seek definitive answers to its questions, the true philosopher rejoices—here is someone else he can rob of certainty.

III

Whenever philosophers reflect on the current state of their discipline, the idea of progress is certain to arise. Especially today do philosophers hunger after progress in their own field, when it is difficult for

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one to attract students or to persuade the government of the necessity for a research grant unless one can show that the collected wisdom of one's discipline is greater today than it was ten years ago. Why should not the philosopher, like the scientist, engage in "research," obtain "results," and be about to announce a "major breakthrough"? The answer is that progress of the sort achieved by science is a mixed blessing. It has its shiny side, but consider what happens to old results once new ones are forthcoming. By making the future better than the past, progress makes the past obsolete. To the degree that philosophy imitates science, it too must regard the work of previous thinkers as primitive.

To those in the positivist tradition, the history of philosophy was nothing but the history of those "splendidly imaginative systems" Russell thought should be thrust aside. One could not teach the thought of previous ages without arousing the immediate suspicion of his colleagues. In the past fifteen years, however, the history of philosophy has regained some of its former respectability. Several journals devoted exclusively to historical topics have flourished, and many journals of general interest find themselves deluged with articles on the Greeks, Descartes, Leibniz, Kant.

Yet the imprint of positivism is still very much upon contemporary philosophy. A good deal of recent work in the history of philosophy has been done with an eye to improving or modernizing classical texts rather than explaining them. An obvious case in point is the literature on Plato. Where once a student of Greek philosophy was expected to know something about the history and literature of the fourth and fifth centuries, he is now expected to achieve a reasonable degree of sophistication in logic and contemporary philosophy of language. Without such knowledge, much of the current literature on Plato would be completely inaccessible. In other words, Plato interests us, but mostly to the extent that he either sheds light on, or can be made to speak, the language of Frege, Russell, and Quine.

The key assumption here was stated very clearly by Gilbert Ryle in 1939 when he referred to classical texts as "adolescent" and argued that they could be understood only by comparing them to the more "adult" thinkers of the twentieth century. Implicit in what Ryle said is that philosophy, like science, does make progress and that classical philosophers cannot be serious rivals to their descendants of the present day. Or can they? Contemporary philosophy may have a clearer idea of logical entailment than Plato had, but what would it mean to say that it has a better understanding of human fallibility, reason, or aspirations? Plato, after all, did not limit his labors to problems which admit of technical refinements or definitive solutions.

Many contemporary philosophers shudder at the mention of these is-

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sues. C. D. Broad once jokingly compared them to pimples and the emotional upsets of youth, saying (only partially in jest): "I've been through it myself in my time, my boy, and I know that it hurts like Hell; but I came through, and so will you if you'll only look at it sensibly." For some, it is shameful to admit that philosophy is pondering the same questions which troubled people thousands of years ago and that our responses might not be any better than theirs—particularly if those questions are deemed illegitimate to begin with.

But not only has Anglo-American philosophy tended to isolate itself from the past; it has to a great extent ignored what has been happening on the Continent. Russell and G. E. Moore thought they had disposed of Hegel once and for all and drew no inspiration whatever from Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, or Husserl. In 1959, Russell compared Anglo-American with Continental philosophy by saying in a BBC interview: "The trends are much more separate than they used to be. Very much more." One of the chief differences, according to Russell, is that Continental thought is "more full blooded and much more like the philosophies of earlier times." Up until a few years ago the Continental tradition was taught on the graduate level at only a handful of American institutions. Today every large department is expected to have at least one person teaching Continental philosophy, but it is considered undesirable to have more than one. Because Continental philosophy deals with such issues as death, religious faith, moral commitment, and psychoanalysis, it is still viewed by many Americans as a somewhat exotic import.

Philosophers have made progress over the ages—only not the sort of progress associated with science. Philosophy advances when new descriptions of the world are offered *in addition to*, not *in replacement of*, older ones. In science the number of radical alternatives from which one can choose is relatively small. A physicist is no longer free to accept the phlogiston theory or the existence of the ether, but a philosopher is free to accept the existence of the soul or the possibility of a Cartesian demon. Philosophy is frustrating because it increases the choices we must make without ever letting us know whether we have chosen correctly. Yet progress has been made in philosophy in the sense that for one who has not cut himself off from the past, or from alternative traditions in the present, it has become increasingly difficult to be dogmatic.

IV

Not all Anglo-American philosophy of this century has looked to science for its inspiration. Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* provides a significant counterexample. Instead of technical terms, a reader

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will find "ordinary discourse"; instead of provable theorems, aphorisms and rhetorical questions. This text, holy scripture for philosophy of the kind now regnant at Oxford, shares with positivism a lack of sympathy with traditional philosophy. Yet while positivism sought to cleanse philosophy of anything not empirically verifiable, Wittgenstein had no such intention. Rather, he called attention to the way philosophers used words without any apparent regard for their normal or everyday usage.

Consider the scandal of not being able to prove the existence of the external world. Philosophers from Descartes on questioned whether we can really know, for sure, whether there are things which cause, but exist independently of, our sensations. Our sense organs may be deceiving us, or we may be dreaming, or we may be the unwitting victims of an evil demon. But to say this is to introduce a sense of the word "know" which runs afoul of its ordinary one. We do, after all, use the word in reference to things around us in a manner that is, except in bizarre circumstances, unproblematic. Since the word has a use in English to which it is admirably suited, what is to be gained by adopting a new and therefore unfamiliar meaning—particularly one which is guaranteed to generate paradoxes?

Norman Malcolm, commenting on the commonsense philosophy of G. E. Moore, saw the point quite clearly: ". . . it is not possible for an ordinary form of speech to be improper." But the net effect of this assumption was to shut the door on centuries of thought, since not many philosophers were willing to "speak with the vulgar," as Berkeley put it. To the philosopher who said we cannot really know that there are objects which exist independently of our perceptions, other philosophers were to reply that, in the absence of compelling reasons to do otherwise, they would continue to use that sense of the word according to which they *can* know them. Rather than tinker with the ordinary meaning of words, philosophy should simply explain the assumptions which underlie them. According to Wittgenstein, "Philosophy may in no way interfere with the actual use of language; it can in the end only describe it."

In this way the goal of philosophy became explicitly self-destructive: to eliminate bogus answers to questions which never should have been put. Here we see another respect in which philosophy is unlike other disciplines. One could never imagine a historian, physicist, or psychologist claiming to have brought his subject to an end, but this is precisely what Wittgenstein thought of himself as doing—twice. In the second case, that of the *Investigations,* philosophy was to culminate in the presentation of a world from which the need to philosophize had been expunged: "Philosophy simply puts everything before us, and neither explains nor deduces anything. —Since everything lies open to view there is nothing to explain. For what is hidden, for example, is of no interest to us." And

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in the same vein: "If one tried to advance *theses* in philosophy, it would never be possible to debate them, because everyone would agree with them."

Admittedly here are two of the darker passages of a thinker whose genius was highly unconventional and, to some, unfathomable. At another place in the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein notes: "Philosophy only states what everyone admits." But, one is inclined to ask, if everybody admits something, why bother stating it at all?

Many of those who followed Wittgenstein ignored this problem—thinking it was worthwhile merely to use ordinary language in contexts where, presumably, it had not been heard for years. As a result, some of their lessons became so simple and matter of fact as to cast doubt on the legitimacy of the whole enterprise. Gilbert Ryle, for example, took to print to "inform" the profession of some of the most banal of truths. In a famous essay, he told idealists that the world does not contain fictions in the way it contains statesmen; and told Platonists that when we say "Unpunctuality is reprehensible" we are not saying that the concept unpunctuality should be ashamed of itself. Ryle's most influential work, *The Concept of Mind*, rejects Cartesian mind/body dualism by showing that it rests on a series of "category mistakes." In plain English, a category mistake is a palpable absurdity—something like saying that the number two tastes good or the end of the day is located in the attic. To a large extent, Ryle's book is an elaborate attempt to set such things straight. The reader learns that after one takes a tour of Oxford, one cannot turn around and ask, "But where is the university?"; that to perform a task keenly or with enthusiasm is not to perform two tasks; that we can claim Great Britain went to the polls but not that the British Constitution did, and so on.

A great deal of contemporary philosophy abounds with such good sense, and therein lies the problem: is it *too* good? Much of what Ryle has to say would be agreed to by anyone capable of grasping its meaning, and therefore his pronouncements, if read aloud, sound vaguely paradoxical. We can imagine no circumstance in which it would be appropriate to assert them. No sane speaker of English has to be told that the British Constitution cannot go to the polls, and no great philosopher ever made a mistake analogous to supposing that it could. But Ryle thought otherwise and believed the great systems of the past could be corrected by uttering simple statements which say nothing out of the ordinary and strain to keep everything in its proper category. If only Plato, Descartes, and Kant had looked at the world in a reasonable way, they would not have said the silly things they did. One not affiliated with the Oxford school may wonder whether Ryle has given us therapy or what Nietzsche termed "insulting clarity."

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Today Wittgenstein's influence can be seen in the works of people like P. F. Strawson, J. R. Searle, Paul Grice, or Stanley Cavell. Yet overall it is not nearly as prominent as people had thought, say, twenty-five years ago. Wittgenstein succeeded in making philosophers more respectful of ordinary language and in showing that Cartesian views of mental phenomena were not nearly as clear and distinct as people supposed. More important, he called into question the idea that philosophy is a well-defined subject with a unique set of problems and a specifiable method for resolving them. It is nonetheless well to remember that he was a philosopher who was, in the last analysis, unsympathetic to philosophy. Although the discipline of philosophy will be better off for having listened to Wittgenstein's criticisms.

Descriptions of ordinary language were satisfying only for a time, perhaps because, from the beginning, everyone had known how to use it. But by the 1960s many philosophers probably would have agreed with Richard Rorty that: "It is obvious that 'systematic linguistic philosophy' runs the risk of scholasticism and insignificance, and that 'Wittgensteinian' philosophy runs the risk of vapid imitation of an aphoristic writer of genius." The only difference is that where Rorty perceived a risk, other philosophers were beginning to see a clear and present danger. Soon philosophical problems began to spring up all over again despite painstaking attempts to clarify the language in which they were stated.

V

The one subject which has seen the most dramatic resurgence in the last decade is moral philosophy. Since moral judgments are not open to empirical confirmation, the positivists have had to argue that these are really nothing more than personal preferences. To say that an action is just is not to say anything about the action itself, only that one approves of it and that others should as well. The notion that there might be good or bad reasons for approving of something has been seen, under the new philosophical dispensation, as a remnant of past confusions. This view was modified somewhat when it was pointed out that a person should at least be consistent in his preferences. It is wrong to approve of torture in one instance and disapprove of it in another if the two are fundamentally alike. But provided one *is* consistent in his approval (for example, every convicted felon should be subjected to torture—and this holds even if I am the guilty party), philosophy can say nothing about the morality of what is being recommended.

It is not difficult to understand why ethics and political philosophy were in decline through much of this century, or why one philosopher, in 1956, went so far as to say that political philosophy, for the moment,

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was dead. Yet shortly after the funeral arrangements were made, the corpse began to stir. Was it really so farfetched to think that philosophy might provide grounds for saying some actions are better than others? Before long it became acceptable, if not fashionable, to hold that there might be room for reasoned argument on ethical questions. But as soon as reasoned argument was again permitted in philosophical circles, it became clear that there were serious disagreements which could not be resolved simply by clarifying such terms as abortion, punishment of criminals, conscientious objection, the rights of the underprivileged.

The most prominent work in recent moral philosophy is John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* (1971). The intent of this lengthy study is to systematize moral intuitions by offering a new and more abstract version of the social contract theory. The reader is asked to imagine a purely hypothetical situation (Rawls terms it the "original position") in which reasonable but self-interested people gather without any knowledge of their places in society, their assets, abilities, intelligence, or psychological propensities. He is also asked to assume that every person has an equal bargaining position with every other. Rawls then defends two principles with which, he argues, every person could agree. The first states that everyone is to have the greatest political liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others; the second, that differences in wealth are permitted only if they work to the benefit of the least advantaged class. Some have criticized Rawls by arguing that it may not be in everyone's interest to play it safe by accepting such egalitarian rules: A person who does not know what abilities he has in the original position may want to risk a certain amount of inequality in the hope that he may turn out to be more gifted than most. Radicals have attacked Rawls on the grounds that his book is more a defense of current moral views than a criticism of them.

But what is noteworthy is that, although Rawls's book is clearly within the tradition of modern analytic philosophy, it is not preoccupied with linguistic issues and is being actively read and discussed by people in economics, jurisprudence, and political science—precisely those fields with which Cambridge philosophy was out of touch. Other books that of late have gained a wide reading in moral philosophy are Robert Nozick's *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (1974), Ronald Dworkin's *Taking Rights Seriously* (1977), and Thomas Nagel's *Mortal Questions* (1979). Finally, there has been renewed interest in classical political theorists, including the two who have been long neglected by the English-speaking world: Hegel and Marx.

One lesson to be learned here is that philosophy gains in cogency when it addresses broader questions than it has in the recent past. Whenever possible, philosophical writing should do more than just relieve aca-

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demic philosophers of confusions they acquired in attempting to relieve other academic philosophers of still deeper confusions. To reach a larger audience, however, philosophers will have to pay some attention to the political, judicial, or aesthetic context in which they are writing and not be afraid to take on questions of the full-blooded variety. The emergence of such journals as *Philosophy and Public Affairs* and *Philosophy and Literature* offers some hope that this is beginning to happen. Yet stumbling blocks remain, the greatest of which is philosophy's sense of itself. At present, the subject appears to be without a center of gravity.

As philosophy has been around since the sixth century B.C., it would be fruitless to look for something common to everyone who made a contribution to it. In this respect, the hodgepodge view of philosophy is correct. At one point in its history, philosophy was not a single subject at all but the pursuit of knowledge in general; at other points, it has been a style of living, a vision of the absolute, a program for social reform, a set of questions, a body of dogma, a method of analysis. Moreover, numerous philosophers have looked to other parts of the campus for inspiration: Russell to science, Marx to economics, Hegel to history, Thomas to theology, Aristotle to biology. No single, unbroken line of development exists, stretching from the twentieth century to some remote spot in the past, which includes everyone of distinction in philosophy.

But because philosophy has had such a diverse past, it hardly follows that "anything goes" is the proper attitude for the future. Finding a conception adequate for all time is one thing; finding a conception appropriate for this age, quite another. In the nineteenth century, philosophy was long on profundity and short on rigor. Incompleteness rather than imprecision was the unforgivable sin. Now it is, of course, just the reverse; the antidote for imprecision is being taken in such large doses that good ideas are being killed off right along with bad. A return to issues like the meaning of life or the likelihood of finding order and purpose in the universe would be welcomed by a growing number of people, both inside and outside the discipline of philosophy.

To say that philosophy can be speculative or analytical, however, is to describe its methods, not its goals. In many cases, the shift within philosophy from speculation to analysis that occurred in the early part of this century was not attended by a shift from the doctrinal to the provocative. Today a visitor to a philosophical conference might still find the proceedings tedious and the participants so obsessed with refuting each other that he may think he is back in the library at Alexandria. Philosopher A propounds a thesis, philosopher B devises a counterexample, and so on until both run out of things to say or it is time to break for dinner, whichever comes first.

What is needed to remedy this situation is not another fresh ism

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(structuralism, naturalism, neo-Marxism, et cetera), but a fundamental change in the goals philosophy sets for itself. Perhaps all that can be done now is to stimulate interest in a variety of conceptual possibilities by presenting alternatives to the status quo. The approach would be tentative—suggestive rather than assertive, forsaking proven results for imaginative proposals. What one contemporary philosopher has described as the "scorched-earth policy" of refutation would have to be replaced by a milder and more sympathetic means of criticism. Such a change naturally would occasion a reassessment of philosophy's relation to the humanistic disciplines and to other activities in which explanation according to the hypothetic-deductive method plays little or no part. This is not to say that science would no longer be of interest to philosophers, but only that inspiration from other sources would be tolerated or even encouraged.

Yet philosophy cannot merely state what everyone admits. One of its primary goals remains: to prevent us from becoming too satisfied with our present conceptual apparatus and lapsing into complacency. "Societies," as Isaiah Berlin put it, "can decay as a result of going to sleep on some comfortable bed of unquestioned dogma." Speculation on absolute certainty is needed, if only to rid us of the hubris of thinking we already have achieved it.

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Maps for a Son Are Drawn as You Go

SAMUEL HAZO

I say what Lindbergh's father
said to Lindbergh: "One boy's
a boy; two boys are half
a boy; three boys are no
boy at all."
Which helps explain
why Lindbergh kept his boyishness
for life, which meant he stayed
himself, which means a lot.
What else is destiny?
After
you learn that governments lie
and happiness is undefinable
and death has no patience,
you'll understand me.
Meanwhile
the ignorant but well-informed
will try to keep you mute
as a shut book.
Forecasters of the best
and worst will hurry to retreat
infallibly into the future.
Ministers
who talk on cue with God
will weigh you down like serious
furniture.
Assume that what
you lose to such distractions
you will gain in strength.
By then
you'll learn that all you know

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will help you less than how
you think.
The rest is memory,
and memory's the graveyard of the mind
as surely as tomorrow is its myth.
Nowhere but the time at hand
is when you'll see that God's
geometry is feast enough.
Within the world's closed circles,
everything's the sum of halves
that rhyme.
From coconuts to butterflies
to lovers knotted on the soft
battlefield of any bed, the halves
add up to one, and every one
remembers where it came from
as a trumpet note recalls
the song it was a part of
and the listeners who heard it
and were changed.
What Lindbergh's
father meant and what I mean
are two roads to the same country.
Knowing how long it takes us
to be young, he left his son
some clues to get his bearings
by . . .
And so do I.

✪ SAMUEL HAZO, director of the International Poetry Forum in Pittsburgh, is the author of *Quartered*, a collection of poetry, and *The Very Fall of the Sun*, a novel.

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Old Man in Winter

VERNON SCANNELL

The cold time again. The seasons dwindle.
The years contract, and yet each day
Is just as long as past days were,
But not the years. Spring flirts and flaunts,
Impatient for the consummation
Of the Summer. It comes,
Is passionate, then langorous,
Heavy with scent and sleep before
The Fall's inexorable tristesse.
But now the Winter moils.
My fire is almost out;
The soft white ash still holds
A little warmth though I perceive
No visible sign of heat,
No sanguine glow. The hour is late.
I hear the brawling wind outside
Shaking the branches of the dying elm,
And I am shaken, too,
But subtly, not as the tree is thrashed
By the gale's insensible rage;
A dudgeon more malevolent
And sly perturbs my brittle boughs,
And I, unlike the elm,
Know that my branches shake, and why.
The room grows cold. Now I must climb
To where sleep, wife-like waits.
Another day dies like the fire.
Succeeding seasons shrink.
The years contract, and yet each day
Is just as long as past days were.
Tomorrow may wear snow. I hope
It will, though no more than a tree
Could I say why I wish this to be so.

✪ VERNON SCANNELL, the well-known British poet, is the author of *A Proper Gentleman* and *Not Without Glory: The Poetry of World War II. The Loving Game,* a recent volume of his verse, won the Heinemann Award and the Cholmondoley Poetry Prize.

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Declines and Falls

ARNALDO MOMIGLIANO

WHAT WOULD HAVE BEEN THE CONSEQUENCES if Edward Gibbon, instead of publishing his *Decline and Fall* in three installments—the first in 1776, the second in 1781, and the third in 1788—had for any reason chosen to publish the complete work in one piece in 1788? According to the best rules of hypothetical history, which has now once again become fashionable under its new name of counterfactual history, we must assume of course that the text would have been exactly as we have it now; and so the only variable we want to consider is the absence of partial publication in 1776 and 1781 of the text which became available in its entirety in 1788. From our hypothesis we can posit two probable consequences.

The first of these probable consequences is that students of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* would be more inclined to connect the book with the French Revolution of 1789 than with the American Revolution of 1776. Whether they would be right (or more right) to do so is a question I am content to let others debate. I have myself connected *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* with the decline and fall of the first English empire. This connection certainly occurred to Gibbon himself, at least in a letter, and was current among his friends and enemies, as shown by the famous lines attributed to Charles James Fox: "King George in a fright lest Gibbon should write—the story of Britain's disgrace." Gibbon, however, is not a historian whom one can simplistically connect with contemporary events.

But the most fascinating probable consequence of a delayed publication of Gibbon's first two volumes is that the two famous chapters connecting the rise of Christianity with the decline of the Roman Empire would have been much less noticed and commented upon. And not only because discussion would have started in 1789, when clergymen and priests of Western Europe had something else to think about. These

✪ ARNALDO MOMIGLIANO, distinguished historian, is Professor Emeritus at University College, London; Alexander White Professor at the University of Chicago; and Professore Ordinario in Soprannumero Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa. His latest book is *Essays in Ancient and Modern Historiography.* This article has been adapted from a paper, "After Gibbon's *Decline and Fall,*" delivered at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in November 1977 in conjunction with the exhibition *Age of Spirituality: Late Antique and Early Christian Art, Third to Seventh Century.* That paper will appear in an altered version in the book *Age of Spirituality: A Symposium.*

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chapters are somehow anomalous in the economy of the whole work. Read in 1776, when they seemed to summarize all that Gibbon had to say about the causes of the decline of Rome, they inevitably gave the impression that Gibbon wanted to expand the thesis already advanced by Voltaire and later repeated by Condorcet—that Christianity had destroyed the most civilized political organism which had ever existed. But with the whole work before our eyes, it is obvious to us that Gibbon neither considered Christianity the sole cause of the fall of Rome nor the fall of Rome the sole theme of his work. To be more explicit, with the whole of the *Decline and Fall* before us, we can say that Gibbon was proposing a new and reassuring image of modern civilization. The disappearance of the Western Roman Empire, the tenacious sterility of the Eastern Empire, the movements of the nomads, the rise of Islam, the urban revolution of the Italian Comuni leading to the renaissance of letters—these were for Gibbon the necessary steps toward the formation of that modern civilization which no barbarian could destroy, because in order to destroy it the barbarian himself would first have to become civilized.

Gibbon cannot, of course, be understood without all his concern for the disappearance of classical pagan culture—that is, of classical pagan values in politics, literature, art, and, generally, society—which is the essence of European humanism. But it would be wrong to dwell exclusively on the classical component in his view of history. Professor J. G. A. Pocock has recently shown that Gibbon used contemporary sociological ideas derived from his friends Adam Smith and David Hume in order to write on the manners of pastoral peoples and to distinguish between religious enthusiasm (which had merits) and fanaticism (which apparently had none). Independently of Pocock, I have myself tried to show that Gibbon's original classicism broke down, inter alia, under the impact of the new Orientalistic research of the late eighteenth century. Two leading figures in Orientalism made a great impression on him: Carsten Niebuhr, the explorer of Arabia, and Sir William Jones, the student of Persian literature and discoverer, for all practical purposes, of Sanskrit literature and law. Sir William Jones was of course a personal friend of Gibbon's.

Furthermore, there were earlier books, such as de Guignes's *Histoire des Huns*, to guide Gibbon through unfamiliar lands, societies, and languages. Gibbon was barred from knowledge of Herder through lack of German; and if he ever heard of Vico, he must have remained uninterested in his kind of speculative history. There were enough serious books either written in or translated into French or English to give Gibbon the opportunity to reconsider in earnest what the attacks of the Huns and the conquests of the Arabs had respectively contributed to the

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dissolution of the Western Roman Empire and to the political and cultural conditions of medieval Byzantium. In Gibbon's opinion, Islam also provoked the second manifestation of the suicidal fanaticism of Western Christianity, the Crusades. By looking beyond the borders of the ancient classical world, Gibbon reasserted the validity of Voltaire's dictum that the Western compilers of universal history, in deference to Jewish prejudices, had forgotten three quarters of the human race (*Essai sur les moeurs* Avant-Propos). He reasserted it, however, in such a way as to lead to the conclusion that both the Christians and their non-Christian opponents had, by their mistakes and wars, provided the more enlightened men of Western Europe with the chance to build a better and more lasting civilization than that of the Roman Empire.

The fact is that the role attributed by Gibbon to Christianity in the fall of the Roman Empire evoked noisy disagreement and less explicit, but equally heated, consent immediately after the publication of the first volume in 1776. When it became possible to read the complete work after 1788, the earlier polemics petered out. No doubt the intellectual atmosphere was different, and attention was directed elsewhere. But as the years passed, the *Decline and Fall* became a recognized masterpiece in which even the Romantic supporters of the Christian Middle Ages found little to blame. I am not aware that the chapters on the Crusades produced anything like the scandal which the final chapters of volume I, on early Christianity, had caused. For the greater part of the nineteenth century, the steady rise of the authority of Gibbon as a historian went together with a substantial indifference to the problem of why the Roman Empire fell. True enough, Jacob Burckhardt's *Die Zeit Constantins des Grossen* ("The Age of Constantine the Great"), which appeared in 1852, was inspired by Gibbon and shared his antipathy toward Constantine and his depreciation of Christianity.

But Burckhardt's work was not typical of his time. The historians of the nineteenth century were far more concerned to discover whether anything new and good had come out of the fall of the Western Roman Empire than to meditate on the fall itself. The leading historians were Germans, and the Germans had plenty of justification for being pleased with themselves, whether they thought of the battle of Adrianople or of Waterloo, of Alaric or of Moltke, of Wulfila or of Goethe. To the Protestants in particular, the anti-Christian mood of Gibbon was unattractive because it did not spare the first centuries of Christianity. But what is characteristic is that difference of belief did not prevent admiration for Gibbon's achievements. In an age in which narrative historiography was everywhere appreciated and competently practiced—it is enough to remember how well even German historians used to write—Gibbon was valued as the supreme model of the narrative historian. Leaving Burck-

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hardt aside, Gibbon's anti-Christian bias seems to have attracted little attention. It is not surprising to find that the first great Jewish classical scholar of the nineteenth century, Jacob Bernays, was also the first to plan a book on Gibbon as a historian that was free from Christian preconceptions. Bernays was by definition a lonely man and became more so in the 1870s, when he disliked Bismarck and turned to England for friendship and hope.

II

To the best of my knowledge there is, therefore, a gap of a good hundred years between the appearance of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* and the emergence of the great discussion on the causes of the fall of Rome—or of the end of ancient civilization—which was one of the central themes of historical research in the 1880s and 1890s and continues well into the twentieth century. If anything is to be noticed in this long interval, it is the interest certain great scientists took in the problem of the decline of civilization. In 1862 Justus Liebig produced an enlarged edition of his pioneer work on organic chemistry in its applications to agriculture and physiology *(Die Chemie in ihrer Anwendung auf Agricultur und Physiologie)*, which had first appeared in 1840. In this enlarged edition there is an introduction which connects the decline of the nations with the exhaustion of their soil, and more specifically of the mineral constituents of the soil, such as potash, soda, sulfur. The theory is applied to the Roman Empire. With reference to Liebig and due mention of Gibbon, Emil Du Bois-Reymond, one of the fathers of modern German physiology, proclaimed in an academic speech of 1877 that the Romans declined because they did not study enough natural sciences; hence the need for a *Real-Gymnasium* in modern Germany, with less Latin and more science, to save civilization.

While Gibbon had been the heir of the optimism of the French Enlightenment and had placed the fall of Rome within a perspective of progress, the new discussion started about 1883–84 in a typical fin de siècle atmosphere, when the problem of decadence in its general terms had developed out of the roots of the social crisis of contemporary Europe. It fell to the lot of Verlaine to give the motto ("Je suis l'Empire à la fin de la décadence") and to Huysmans to produce the prototype of the decadent; but each European nation came to have its own Byzantines, and I gather that even America was not spared them. The periodical *Le Décadent*, edited by Anatole Baju, appeared in April 1886. Mental sanity and political sanity were closely associated in this period, which saw the beginnings of psychoanalysis. Questions of degeneration were a lifelong concern for Cesare Lombroso, the Italian Jew who pioneered the scien-

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tific study of crime and combined sympathy for socialism with horror at revolutionaries. He developed in 1890 (*Delitto politico e le Rivoluzioni* in collaboration with R. Laschi) the theory already outlined in a very famous pamphlet of 1883, *Due tribuni studiati da un alienista.* This theory, which he called "nuova teoria psichiatro-zoologica delle rivoluzioni," was intended to show that deep historical changes are brought about by madmen who, being madmen, express what normal people would repress. It was not by chance that Lombroso's son-in-law Guglielmo Ferrero wrote a work which, had he completed it, would have embraced both the greatness and the decadence of Rome and would have fully developed Lombroso's theories.

When Ferrero began to publish his *Grandezza e Decadenza di Roma* in 1902 (to the delight of Theodore Roosevelt), the generic discussion on decadence had already been accompanied by a more specific, detailed, and technical discussion on the decline of Rome that continued for several years. My bibliographical list of these more technical researches on the decline of Rome starts with a paper by the Austrian Jewish *Sozial-Demokrat* Ludo Moritz Hartmann, "Ueber die Ursachen des Unterganges des römischen Reiches" in *Archiv für soziale Gesetzgebung und Statistik* 2, 1889. Hartmann published a popular book on the same subject later, in 1903. However scientific the presentation, the ghost of the present was always behind these theories about the past. Even Thomas Hodgkin, the historian of Italy and its invaders, felt the urge to publish in the *Contemporary Review* of 1898 a paper with the telling title "The Fall of the Roman Empire and Its Lessons for Us."

Three of these papers that quickly succeeded each other and are clearly interrelated can here be treated in more detail—because the pleasure they gave me when I first read them has never been exhausted. The earliest is the theory of "Die Ausrottung der Besten" ("The elimination of the best") by Otto Seeck. It produced a sensation when it appeared in the first volume of his monumental *Geschichte des Untergangs der antiken Welt* in 1895—the year, incidentally, in which Brooks Adams published his *Law of Civilization and Decay*—but the outlines had already been given in the *Deutsche Rundschau* of 1892. Seeck maintained that an inverted Darwinism could explain the decline of the ancient world in the sense that the political developments of antiquity had implied a continuous elimination of the best elements of society. Social struggles, external wars, and, later, religious persecutions ended regularly in the murder of the most able and morally serious opponents. As the elimination of rivals was in the nature of ancient political struggles, according to Seeck, it was almost a tautology to conclude that only opportunists saved their skins in defeat. Contrary to a widespread legend, there was no vulgar racism in Seeck, who was one of the very few Ger-

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man historians to recognize the high level of spiritual creativity of the Jews throughout the centuries.

Julius Beloch, who in 1900 undertook to refute Seeck in the *Historische Zeitschrift,* was in fact not so distant from him as he thought he was. Beloch too, in his own way, emphasized the elimination of the best, but put the responsibility for the elimination of the best squarely on the shoulders of the Romans. By destroying Greek liberty, the Romans destroyed the roots of ancient civilization. The Roman soldier who murdered Archimedes in Syracuse at the end of the third century B.C. was the symbol of Rome murdering Greece. Not ancient Rome but Renaissance Florence was the heir of Athens in the eyes of this German professor, transplanted to Rome. Both Seeck and Beloch, though purporting to explain the end of ancient civilization—that is, the end of the Roman Empire—discovered the causes in a process which started many centuries before the fall of the Western Empire and had its center in Greece rather than in Rome. By some sort of teleological projection, which Arnold Toynbee was later to share, Rome was made to fall in consequence of the decline of Greece. Seeck did not even make Rome directly responsible for the decline of Greece.

In 1896, between Seeck's and Beloch's papers, Max Weber had uttered his very different verdict, which was rigorously limited to the Roman Empire. The original text in the periodical *Wahrheit* found little immediate echo. But a new version in the article "Agrarverhältnisse im Altertum," published in the *Handbuch der Staatswissenschaften*—first in 1897 and then in 1909—became famous. In America W. L. Westermann was one of those who underlined its importance as early as 1915 in an article, "The Economic Basis of the Decline of Ancient Civilisation," in the *American Historical Review.* Later, Max Weber's thesis was put into general circulation by M. I. Rostovtzeff, who wrote about it in more than one place. In his turn Max Weber owed something to Marx and Engels—more specifically to Engels, who in *Der Ursprung der Familie, des Privateigentums und des Staates* had hinted at the decline of the cities and at the replacement of slaves by serfs in agriculture as the signs of the end of the ancient world. But what was known of Marx's writing about antiquity at the beginning of this century, and what Engels had developed out of it in his own way, was cursory and insufficiently documented. It must not be confused with the later developments of Marxist historiography, which made the transition from antiquity to the Middle Ages one of the most controversial and sensitive fields of Soviet historiography. For Weber, ancient Rome, like modern Prussia, had fallen into the hands of a landowning aristocracy which was hostile to progress and reform. The more the big Roman estates became self-sufficient, the less the cities were capable of paying for their own maintenance. When the

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Roman state was compelled to stop its expansion, the normal source of supply of slaves—conquest—disappeared. Thus slaves had to be replaced by *coloni,* who reproduced themselves by ordinary family life and consequently *qua* family consumed a greater portion of what they produced. This increased the power of the landlords and reduced the wealth of the cities, to which less food came from the country. City life—which is literally civilization—declined with the decline of slavery and with the rise of the ancient Junkers. This explanation did not quite satisfy Rostovtzeff, but when he gave his own in a paper of 1923 (*Le Musée Belge*), and then in his great book of 1926, he accepted Weber's major premise that there was a conflict between city and country in late antiquity. Indeed in the light of his Russian experience he saw a Red army of Roman peasants terrorizing the cities, which had lost control of the situation. Rostovtzeff never questioned the assumption implicit in Weber's major premise: that slaves cannot reproduce themselves and must be replaced by *coloni* when external supplies run out. As far as I know, this assumption remained unchallenged (in the case of Roman—not, of course, of American—slavery) until Moses Finley exploded it in 1958.

A chronicle of theories about the decline and fall could easily continue on this familiar path for a considerable time. It would show American scholars, with the characteristic exception of W. L. Westermann, introducing topics nearer their home ground: race mixture (Tenney Frank), changes in climate (Ellsworth Huntington), and body exhaustion (as the Russian-American Vladimir G. Simkhovitch first proposed in the *Political Science Quarterly* in 1916). Soon Oswald Spengler appeared in Germany—to project back the despair of the conquered nations of the First World War to the end of other civilizations. Spengler, we remember, moved a great historian like Eduard Meyer to a reply which was not total disagreement, and ultimately inspired Arnold Toynbee to outline a competitive "Morphologie der Weltgeschichte." Toynbee, far more subtle in construction (we have gained from him the distinction between inner and external proletariat), faced the question that did not trouble Spengler: how to reconcile a cyclical theory of the rise and fall of civilizations with a religious faith, whether Christian or Hindu.

But I suspect that we have again lost interest in the problem of why Rome fell. At the root of my suspicion is the impression, which I believe to be widely shared, that our problems are incommensurable in quality and quantity with those of Rome in decline. Yet I would not like to rely on impressions. At least three different types of consideration make it advisable to reexamine the legitimacy of the question "Why did Rome fall?" The first type of consideration I shall touch on only briefly, because other people are more competent than I to deal with it. It is the very nature of the change which, with characteristic ambiguity, used to

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be called either "the fall of Rome" or "the fall of ancient civilization," as if the identity of the two terms "Rome" and "ancient civilization" could be taken for granted. The second type of consideration is suggested by the thesis set out in the first part of this essay—namely, that what moved Gibbon to look for the cause of the decline and fall of Rome is very different from what, one century later, started the new hunt for the hidden cause of this decline. Third, finally and rather obviously, there are methodological difficulties in the use of the category of causality in historical research which even the least theoretically minded historian has to take into account.

III

I am not, of course, underrating the weight of articulate and well-informed research which still instinctively equates the disruption of the Roman Empire with the end of a better civilization. It is a telling sign of our enduring classicism that our books still devote much more space to explaining why the Romans became weaker than why the Germans became stronger. Nobody would dream of explaining the decline and fall of the Incas without explaining what happened in Spain, but this is what classically minded historians still do for Rome. They study the Romans and believe they have understood the Germans, too. However, nowadays few people would take for granted what my teacher Gaetano De Sanctis and his teacher Julius Beloch—the one a Catholic and the other a materialist—both took for granted: that the Parthenon was more beautiful than Hagia Sophia and that Plato or even Cicero wrote better than Saint Augustine. Most historians of antiquity enjoy Ammianus Marcellinus and the Venerable Bede more than Xenophon or Livy. Interestingly enough, Bernard Berenson may well remain the last great art critic to take up the defense of classicism against what he called "decline of form" in his 1952 book on the arch of Constantine.

Politically, we are less and less certain that there is happiness in big bureaucratic states such as the Roman Empire. My delight as an Italian is to cover the few miles which separate Verona from Padua, or Pisa from Lucca, or Faenza from Forli and discover a different historical tradition, a different religious and political mood, and consequently a different way of ensuring the continuity of social life among the often ferocious contrasts of internal factions. To say the least, our ideological sympathies are divided. Theodoric, the first German king of Italy, killed Boethius, the last of the Romans; even worse, he was an Arian heretic and apparently an analphabet. But his Latin Catholic minister Cassiodorus formulated religious tolerance in such a way that the French Protestants chose some of his obiter dicta as their mottoes during the Wars of

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Religion: "Religionem imperare non possumus, quia nemo cogitur ut credat invitus"; "Cum divinitas patiatur multas esse religiones nos non audemus unam imponere." Several years ago I enjoyed discovering that Casaubon himself had chosen these mottoes to adorn the frontispiece of his copy of Cassiodorus's *Variae.* Compare with Cassiodorus and his master Theodoric Justinian, the man who destroyed the Gothic rule of Italy only to open up the way to the Lombards. I have at last had the leisure to go through all that is left of Justinian's theological writing—which still makes a sizable quarto. Though prepared by samples for the worst, I was surprised by the extravagance of his claim to dictate orthodoxy and present himself as the "defensor fidei." One can sympathize with the Roman Pope Agapitus, to whom Justinian nominally offered his collaboration in defense of the true faith but effectively indicated his own will. Agapitus timidly protested: "It is my business, not your business, to preach orthodoxy." "Non quia laicis auctoritatem praedicationis admittimus sed quia studium fidei vestrae patrum nostrorum regulis congruens confirmamus atque roboramus."

Justinian's ear for Latin was probably not up to appreciating the irony of this hint. If Justinian's ambition to reconstruct the Roman Empire had been fulfilled—and it came very near to realization—it would have introduced into Western Christianity that imperial supervision of religious thought from which the Germans saved us. The spectacle of an emperor heaping insults upon a long dead master of the Christian faith—and one of the most genuine metaphysical thinkers of any time (Origen)—remains exemplary, with the additional touch that Justinian or his advisers often took for pure Origen what was actually the interpretation of Origen by Euagrius Ponticus. I prefer not to choose between the German king who killed Boethius and the Roman emperor who damned Origen's works on the assumption that Origen's body (or whatever represented Origen's body) was safely damned in hell. Therefore I am not sure that the fall of Rome implied decline.

What is more, I am also not sure that the fall of Rome implied decline for all the educated Christians who witnessed it. Ambivalence of attitudes toward the Roman Empire is an essential feature of Christian thought, both before and after Constantine. Early Christian thought was particularly sensitive to the oppression of individual nations by Rome. The eighth sibylline book and the commentary on Daniel by Hippolytus of Rome contained emphatic remarks on this point. Later, Saint Augustine was ready to admit that from the Christian point of view there was nothing to choose between an immense empire and small national states. Augustine seems in fact to imply that small states were less likely to be founded on "latrocinia." Orosius made the even more momentous admission that perhaps a providential hand had guided the invaders into the

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Empire so that they could be brought into contact with Christianity. The birth of Christian literatures in Syriac, Coptic, Armenian, and so on showed that the need for self-expression in their native tongues was very real among Christians. Christianity had derived from Judaism a strong emotional respect for local and national roots.

No doubt after Constantine's conversion the temptation to see the Roman Empire as the instrument provided by God for the salvation of mankind was irresistible. Eusebius and his followers developed this argument, and soon Christian emperors began to perform miracles and to discover holy relics. There was no difficulty for a Christian bishop in recognizing at the right moment that "vere Dominus propitius est imperio Romano," to repeat Saint Ambrose's words. But the system of Christian values and beliefs remained impervious; it did not merge with the system of imperial values. When pagans pointed to the disasters which had followed the Christianization of the Empire, the Christians reacted with indignation. But not even indignation against such accusations induced Augustine and Orosius to identify the ethics of Christianity with those of the Empire. The paradox of the situation was that, even after having conquered the Roman Empire, the Christians remained what they had been from the beginning: critics of imperial ideology.

Rather than taking commonly known texts, let us consider for a moment a work which was added fairly recently to the dossier of the Augustinian defense of Christianity against the pagans who accused the Christians of ruining the Roman Empire. For various reasons this text has not yet been properly appreciated, though under the title of *Anonymus contra philosophos* it occupies about four hundred pages of a volume of the Latin series of the Corpus Christianorum. The text was discovered and published in Spain from a manuscript preserved in Valencia by A. E. Anspach in the unpropitious year 1942. He attributed the text to the period between A.D. 525 and 550. A few years later, in 1949, B. Blumenkranz noticed that the text was also preserved in Bodley's Library in a Rawlinson codex together with another treatise, obviously by the same author, against the Jews. Blumenkranz gave reasons for believing that the author belonged to the twelfth century—which immediately distracted the attention of students of the ancient world. In fact Blumenkranz's arguments, notwithstanding his immense competence in this subject, were never cogent; and I am satisfied that the new editor of the treatise *Contra philosophos* in the Corpus Christianorum, Diethard Aschoff, is likely to be right in returning to the sixth-century date. Both treatises—the anti-pagan and the anti-Jewish—are "florilegia" from Saint Augustine of the type which was common in late antiquity, and more precisely in the early sixth century. The *Contra philosophos* transforms into a dialogue some of the main arguments of the *De civitate Dei*, with additions from

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other Augustinian (or ps.-Augustinian) works, most notably the *Enchiridion* and the *De consensu Evangelistarum.* The principal pagan opponents of Saint Augustine—from Scipio Nasica, Varro, and Cicero to Apuleius, Porphyry, and Iamblichus—are brought to argue personally with Saint Augustine and, needless to say, are knocked down one after another. The confrontation, which starts with the specific question whether Christianity damaged the political structure of the Empire, involves all pagan thought and turns mainly on the value of Neoplatonism. The whole work is a lively and well-organized restatement of the philosophy of Saint Augustine, made at a time when both the decline of Rome and the value of Platonism were living issues. In the early sixth century, Zosimus was not the only pagan to ask questions about the responsibility of the Christians for the decline of Rome, and Boethius was certainly not the only Christian to be sufficiently attracted by Neoplatonism to succumb to it. Thus in this "florilegium" Saint Augustine is made to reassert that the Christians have done nothing to weaken the Empire. At the same time, Saint Augustine is shown once again as unable to accept imperial values, and restates the primary Christian concern for the salvation of the individual soul.

IV

Now, it was from Christian polemics against the pagan intellectuals, no less than from the pagan intellectuals themselves, that Gibbon learned the relevance of Christian ethics to any inquiry on the fall of Rome. His point of view has, therefore, an immediate relation to the self-awareness of late Roman intellectuals that is missing in the search for the causes of the fall of Rome as it developed a century later, from Ludo Hartmann and Otto Seeck onward. It would not, of course, be difficult to collect complaints in ancient texts about taxation, the barrenness of the land, the infertility of mankind, and above all despotism. But none of these complaints was a central issue for contemporaries—as the victory of Christianity certainly was for the intellectuals who witnessed and recognized the slow sinking of the Empire. Gibbon's strength is that he relies on the self-awareness of the late Romans themselves. If he is still unshakable, it is because he is one of those rare historians—like Thucydides or Guicciardini or Tocqueville—who put their finger on something vital for the actors themselves. Much history, of course, happens beyond the borders of self-awareness; this does not make it less important to define the explicit problems of an age.

It is also evident that Gibbon did not succeed in placing his chapters on Christianity at the right point for the right purpose. They come too early in his narration; they do not keep to the main theme of the relation

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between Christianity and Empire; and they do not show with sufficient coherence the process of formation of the new Christian organization within the imperial structure. In a memorable page of chapter 20 (which is the chapter on the conversion of Constantine), he observes: "When Constantine embraced the faith of the Christians, he seemed to contract a perpetual alliance with a distinct and independent society." This remark is not made the center of the story, as it should be. Most curiously, even Augustine's *Civitas Dei* is appreciated, or rather dismissed, in a brief footnote: "His learning is too often borrowed, and his arguments are too often his own, but the whole work claims the merit of a magnificent design, vigorously, and not unskillfully executed." I have sometimes wondered whether Gibbon ever read through *De civitate Dei* or whether he absorbed its principles indirectly. As Carl Becker taught us long ago, the *Civitas Dei* is at the root of all the historical thought of the Enlightenment, apart from being the foundation of Gibbon's specific notion of the inherent conflict between Christianity and the Roman Empire. But the route by which Augustinianism reached Gibbon is a very tortuous one, which has still to be mapped in detail. Bossuet and Voltaire are only two of the intermediate stations.

These deficiencies of Gibbon's, once admitted, may, however, turn out to constitute another point in his favor. His thesis—just because it is primarily the recognition of an authentic state of mind among late Latin thinkers—avoids the most obvious objections which any search for causes in history is likely to raise.

There is no need to go into theoretical subtleties. Ultimately Rome fell because it was conquered. German tribes took over the Western part of the Empire. If we want a cause, this is the cause; and we may dignify it by calling it the military superiority of the conquerors. The truth is that we do not want that cause because we rightly feel that it does not make the situation meaningful; it is too obvious or too trivial really to explain what happened. A great historian, André Piganiol, re-proposed it after World War II because he was justly angry with the Germans, but he abandoned it when he was less angry. So we go on searching for real causes, with all the emphasis on the word "real." And soon we learn that there is nothing easier than to find real causes. Anything which makes a situation meaningful can be turned into a cause, either in isolation or in conjunction with other elements. Heavy taxation, decline of cities, incompetence or corruption among civil servants, barbarization of the army, race mixture, transition from slavery to serfdom, and indeed plagues are important features of the late Roman situation which we can call causes of the decline of Rome, if we so wish. But what would we gain from calling them causes? To make them causes we should have to put the various elements of the situation in a certain order and to show

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that element A—say, the barbarization of the army—is the cause of element B—say, heavy taxation—which in its turn is the cause of element C—say, the corruption of the civil servants. If we embark on this operation we shall be told by the first fellow historian we meet on our path that element C—the corruption of civil servants—may be turned with minimum effort into the cause of element B—heavy taxation—which in its turn looks like the cause of element A—the barbarization of the army—because it stands to reason that you cannot use as soldiers those whom you want as taxpayers. One causal series will probably look slightly more probable than the other, but plausibility is not a ready criterion for judgment when the situation is extremely complex and many elements are available for different combinations.

Historians, one must admit, were not created by God to search for causes. Any search for causes in history, if it is persistent, as in the case of the fall of the Roman Empire, becomes comic—such is the abundance of causes discovered. And this really ends the matter. What we want is to understand the change by analyzing it and by giving their due to conscious decisions, deep-seated urges, and the interplay of disparate events. But we must have a mental picture, a model of the whole situation as a term of reference, and here I submit is where Gibbon helps us because he understood that late antiquity meant the replacement of paganism by Christianity.

If what we want is to understand the fall of the Roman Empire in the West we must somehow include all the elements I have mentioned, and no doubt many others. As the Marxists saw, the decline of slavery and the rise of serfdom are important features. Yet I would still maintain—as I did first some forty-five years ago—that Gibbon offers the framework to include the other elements. The more so because he never succeeded in turning Christianity into the cause, or even the main cause, of the fall of the Empire. What he understood was a situation. It was a situation in which Constantine recognized the power of an organization controlling the life and thought of the most assertive and expansive group of Roman citizens: the Christians.

We must go further on the way indicated by Gibbon. The Christian Church had become a state within the State, just as in early Rome the plebs had become a state within the State. It had its own hierarchy, its own rules, its own beliefs, and its own loyalties. Like the early plebs, the Christian Church offered increasing opportunities for leadership to those who were excluded from the ruling class. Indeed, what characterized the late Christian plebs, as it had characterized the early urban plebs of Rome, was the proximity of the Church's leaders to the grassroots. Instead of the Roman provincial governors coming from the center and having a limited period of residence in the provinces, the Christians

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most often elected local people as bishops for life. Yet the new Christian plebs, like the ancient urban plebs, were prepared to give a chance to aristocrats, if they were ready to join its ranks. For a late Roman aristocrat, conversion was, in social terms, the equivalent of *transitio ad plebem.* This was the reality with which Constantine decided to come to terms—not just out of sheer calculation.

An empire built on such a dual organization of State and Church was never going to be the same as the old one. There is no point in asking whether the Christian regime accelerated or slowed down the inability of the Roman army to stand up to the barbarians, or whether it increased or reduced the burden of taxation. But we know that anything which happened in the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. had to be fitted into a new frame. The Christian communities practiced proselytism, did not tolerate dissent, obeyed their local spiritual leaders more willingly than their political administrators and governors, and were expected to care more about the certainties of the next life than the uncertainties of this life. Even if they increasingly relied on monks and priests to keep the peace of God, there were moments in which the Christian laymen could not escape their personal liabilities toward God. The significant point is not that Sozomenus could tell his readers that "piety alone is enough to save the kings." This sentence, to say the least, is ambiguous. If taken to refer to earthly prosperity, it would only too quickly be contradicted by experience. It did not need Machiavelli to discover that wars are not won by prayers.

What is really characteristic of the Christian Empire is what Hilary of Arles says of Saint Honorat, the bishop of Arles who died in 430. Saint Honorat belonged to a consular family, but out of love for truth did not seek the "vain honours of his relatives": "pro amore veritatis iam suos non optabat." The classical world had known the choice between *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa,* not between two *vitae activae,* one for the State, the other for the Church.

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Smile

D. M. THOMAS

The smile is already there
in the first snap, let's say 17,
under the mop of black
fuzzy ringlets, sitting on the back
steps of a granite cottage
in a Cornish village

the smile is still there
decorative as a film star
at the wheel of a Model-T
(my father in drainpipe trousers
proudly draped against them both)
in front of a Spanish-white
bungalow in California

and is there, in the same white
place and in the same sunny
era, my sister in her arms,
and is there
under her early-gray hair
sitting on a donkey
on a Cornish beach

and is there
on a bright January day
having tea outside
with her sisters-in-law
and my grandmother
while I stare solemnly
at my first-birthday candle

and the smile is there
under tight white curls
in a Melbourne park,

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a plump floral woman
by my plump floral sister
and I a fat youth poking his tongue

and is there, in the last snap
of my father, color Kodak,
on a Cornish quay, and is there
behind her glasses, hiding pain,
under thinning white hair
on her last holiday with us

and now that she is dead and gone,
having smiled in the undertaker's hut
so I shouldn't feel guilty,
and now that her death has faded
like the snaps,
the smile is still there,
some poems have no beginning and no end.

✪ D. M. THOMAS is a British poet whose newest collection is *The Honeymoon Voyage.*

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Max Hayward

A Memoir

RONALD HINGLEY

MAX HAYWARD DIED IN OXFORD in March 1979 at the early age of fifty-four, after being for many years a leading English consultant—as well known in the United States as in Britain—on the pathology of Soviet literary politics. That he was also, as a man, far more than the sum total of his impressive pioneering achievements in this field I hope to show in due course. But I begin by briefly reviewing his publications.

It was Hayward's translation, with Manya Harari, of Pasternak's novel *Doctor Zhivago* that first brought him to attention, in 1958. And it was with Pasternak that he ended his career twenty years later, bringing out in English the two important volumes of reminiscences about the poet-novelist by Alexander Gladkov and Olga Ivinskaya. Between these terminals came much else. There were the wide-ranging double-decker memoirs of Nadezhda Mandelstam, which—despite being repetitive and occasionally cantankerous—convey more of the texture of Soviet intellectual life in the Stalin period than is found in any other primary source. Hayward also collaborated with English-speaking poets in sensitive translations of important Russian verse; among them is the selection from Anna Akhmatova produced in conjunction with Stanley Kunitz. It might also be claimed that Hayward and I jointly "discovered" Solzhenitsyn so far as the West is concerned, and we collaborated in translating his first book to be published in English, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich.* We also translated some stories by "Abram Tertz" together before this was revealed as the pseudonym of Andrei Sinyavsky. The same author-critic's notorious ordeal of 1966, with that of Yuli Daniel, forms the subject of another publication, *On Trial,* consisting of documents in English translation edited by Hayward with Leopold Labedz.

These publications—and others of key importance to the Western understanding of Soviet cultural and intellectual life—show Hayward's flair for linguistic, political, and psychological nuances, much of the material being supported by an impressive apparatus criticus. It bristles

✪RONALD HINGLEY is University Lecturer in Russian at the University of Oxford. He is the author of biographies of Dostoevski, Chekhov, and Stalin, and is currently at work on a study of twentieth-century Russian poetry.

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with evidence of its editor-translator's intuitive insight into a civilization which, when he started work, was still profoundly mysterious to the inquiring Western reader.

Hayward's learned articles have also been influential, beginning with his study of the Pilnyak and Zamyatin case of 1929–30. This episode was the first big step in the intensification of literary controls under Stalin, the significance of which was here comprehensively analyzed for the first time. Some of his articles consist of contributions to symposia on modern Russian literature edited by himself, among them being *Literature and Revolution in Soviet Russia, 1917–1962* and *Soviet Literature in the Sixties*, edited jointly with Leopold Labedz and Edward L. Crowley respectively. They were the product of conferences, held in Oxford and Bad Wiessee, of which Hayward was one of the principal organizers and leading spirits. He also attended and sponsored numerous other international conferences on Soviet literary politics, including one on censorship, and could chair them with equal adroitness in English or Russian. Nor should we forget the prefaces to his translations, among which two long essays on Pasternak are outstanding. Like all his other writings, they are quiet and authoritative in tone, patiently expounding the interplay of Soviet Russian life and politico-literary administration.

In a sense, all Hayward's work is a monument to his unselfishness. His translating expertise was largely expended on material more impressive for its documentary and sociological significance than for its artistic merit. As for his articles, far from joyfully commemorating a flourishing literary culture, they were in large measure devoted—and inevitably so, given the nature of his subject—to logging the lamentable ways in which such a culture came to be asphyxiated by eager bureaucrats, including failed authors. It was in the spirit of a pioneering forensic pathologist that he approached Soviet literary politics.

Here is an impressive achievement, and its influence will long be felt. Yet the suggestion has sometimes been made that Hayward fell short of his full potential because he neither attempted any piece of major systematic research nor ever published an original book of his own. That those were, or should have been, his aims was a fairly common assumption among fellow students of Russian affairs, especially as he somehow triggered the proprietorial concern of many a Russist who barely knew him. "What is Max up to?" would be the query, as if he were in some way answerable even to total strangers. We also note that, like Beerbohm, he was rarely alluded to except by his first name.

While stressing Hayward's failure to contribute the major study that everyone expected of him, several obituary writers have rated this unwritten phantom masterpiece higher than the too, too solid oeuvre contributed by those pedestrian scholars who have weakly succumbed to the

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"vulgar ambition" (as one journalist implied) of presenting their researches in completed form. Heard songs are sweet, one gathers, but those unheard are sweeter! Hayward himself would never have subscribed to such arrant nonsense. Nor did he pretend for one moment, to me at least, that he had the remotest intention of contributing the magnum opus that others credited to him in their imaginations. Besides, he had too much firsthand experience of disciplined academic work in his own special line, and far too much common sense, to disparage others' realized achievements in favor of some notional publication of his own. I never knew a scholar more generous in his praise of other scholars' efforts; and if he never wrote an original book himself, he must have inspired a small library of original contributions written by others.

We need do no more than scan some of the bibliographical details given above (which include the names of Edward L. Crowley, Manya Harari, Stanley Kunitz, Leopold Labedz and myself as collaborators) to realize how well and productively Hayward worked with others. There were many more such professional allies, one or two of whom must have known him as well as, or better than, I did. I am, then, only one of the many who benefited from his company, and from the sheer exhilaration that he imparted to so many aspects of Russian studies, even as he disparaged them in his inimitable offbeat style. But I hope to be excused for passing over his influence on his other associates in order to concentrate on the stimulus that he gave to me personally. On this I can speak with greater authority than anyone, and without invidiously purporting to arbitrate his relations with third parties.

Though our friendship spanned more than half his life—his last thirty-four years, to be precise—it was slow to develop. It was in Oxford, and in the autumn of 1945, that we first met. I was a newly demobilized wartime army officer reverting to interrupted undergraduate studies, while Hayward—a year or two younger than I—looked, and was, spectacularly unmilitary; which suited my mood admirably after five years in uniform. He had just graduated, having missed military experience himself on medical grounds, though he seemed physically robust as well as mentally.

I was as much impressed by his linguistic prowess as by his charm of character, not being accustomed to meeting an Englishman who spoke Russian as fluently as he. For some years, though, our friendship did not go beyond benevolent neutrality, for our paths rarely crossed. While I was variously engaged at London University, Hayward went to Prague as a graduate student, picking up fluent Czech in passing; to Moscow as a junior diplomat; and to the University of Leeds as head of the department of Russian. During the Hungarian uprising of 1956, he was in central Europe helping young Hungarians fleeing their country to obtain

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places at British universities. Need I say that a few sniffs had given him a working knowledge of the Magyar tongue?

By now he was about to take up a post at Oxford, to which university I too had recently returned, and it was shortly after the Hungarian episode that he telephoned me at home, having chanced to pick up a recently published novel of mine. His praise was all the more welcome because I knew him as a connoisseur of the genre in which I had written—anti-utopistic political satire. There was no reason to refuse his urgent invitation to celebrate my new book, after which we quickly became close allies and almost fellow conspirators. For many years there was hardly a week when we did not meet several times if he was in Oxford. These were chiefly the encounters of friends with strong common interests that included eating, drinking, and discussing the arcana of Soviet literary policy. In retrospect, though, it seems evident that Hayward had quietly taken charge, in a sense, of my academic career without ever seeming to. It was as if he had decided to rescue me for Russian studies at this period when I happened to be thoroughly disillusioned with them.

On the special atmosphere—a curious mixture of the oppressive and the farcical—dominant in the first postwar decade of Slavonic studies in Britain, Hayward and I were in close agreement. But perhaps I am too solemn, for the plain fact is that we spent a great deal of the time devoted to Russia's problems in laughing at them, and that the venue for these uproarious sessions was, more often than not, some convenient Oxford pub. In one, the Gardener's Arms in North Parade—of which we seemed to be practically the only customers in those days—we did no little serious work. It consisted of jointly elaborating ideas that were eventually expressed in published form. One outcome was my *Modern Russian Reader.* The book contains selected passages from the prose literature of Soviet Russia, chosen to provide an insight into the modern language combined with a comprehensive commentary on the country's historical and social development. There is a strong accent on humor, fantasy, and impropriety, and the Hayward touch is already evident on the contents page, containing as it does such varied items as "February Riots in Petrograd," "The Cement-Mixing Record," "Death of Stalin," "The First Men on Mars," and "The Giant Snakes." Here too Hayward insisted that I write for the Washington, D.C., journal *Problems of Communism* an article on *vranyo:* the special Russian brand of artistic lying or "blarney."

Though Hayward inspired others to do things that he had not the time or inclination to do himself, I shall not become so befuddled by commemorative zeal as to suggest that any of my own works were partly written by him. Nor was he my client or protégé, any more than I was

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his. But it is also true that, had it not been for his encouragement and for the entertainment that we derived from working together, some of my own work of the late 1950s and early 1960s would never have been written at all.

In those far-off years, Hayward and I also collaborated in conducting a class in Russian prose composition. It consisted of a duel by translation whereby we would each arrive with an independently concocted Russian version of some splendidly complex and ironical piece of English; Aldous Huxley, Norman Douglas, Evelyn Waugh, and George Orwell were among our favorite sources. We would then fire our versions off at each other and our students, who also brought their own renderings. Native Russian speakers were encouraged to participate, and there could have been no better training for future translators working the other way round.

Hayward never visited the Soviet Union after the 1950s, which was no doubt inevitable; for one wonders whether, during the entire history of that country, there has ever been any foreign visitor more categorically "un-visa-worthy." What capitalist hyena but he would have contrived to spend a night in Moscow carousing with a uniformed colonel of Stalin's secret police? Or have made himself so formidable an expert on Russia's equivalent of four-letter words? Modest in style and urbane in manner—though prone to round on the occasional superbore—he had the knack of proceeding through a trail of riotous absurdities somehow generated in others by his presence. His impishness in wandering around central Tiflis, asking to be directed to "Beria Square," gains its piquancy from Beria's status at the time; once Stalin's chief henchman, he had been liquidated and converted into an "unperson"—as his square had of course been hastily converted into someone else's square—shortly before these bland inquiries were directed in impeccable Russian at a succession of disconcerted Georgian men-in-the-street. Then again, who but Hayward would have immortalized a visit to Astrakhan by striking up an acquaintance with the organizer of that otherwise dreary city's chief call-girl circuit? This arch-pimp of the Caspian was glad to explain his pricing policy, itemizing a tariff that ranged from the odd "succulent morsel" (*baba s bagazhom*) at the top to the "clapped-out junk" (as I bowdlerize *vyyebannoye barakhlo*) at the foot of the scale.

Then there was the story of the patriotic holiday-making Soviet pickpocket whom Hayward met when contemplating a swim at a Black Sea beach. He was just about to leave his watch in his unguarded trousers when his new friend arose to denounce this negligence as a grave insult to the professional skill of himself in particular and the Soviet criminal classes in general. Embarking on a patriotic eulogy of "our Soviet crook" (*nash sovetsky zhulik*), the man contrasted the prowess of his felonious

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fellow countrymen with the allegedly inferior record of the bourgeois lawbreaking fraternity. As this episode stresses, Max had the gift of instant communication with the underworld, and once gave a seminar in Oxford on the history of Soviet crime. But he was no snob, for there is no doubt whatever that he could commune equally easily with noncriminal millionaires or duchesses.

To put Hayward's more grotesque confrontations on Soviet soil in perspective, one must remember that they took place at a time when few foreigners could get much further (can they, even now?) in conversation with Soviet citizens than being fatuously informed that the USSR "wants peace"—or being otherwise regaled with some stale wad of regurgitated propagandist cud.

As befitted his high reputation, Max was often denounced in the Soviet press, not uncommonly as "a certain" (*neky*) or "the not unknown" (*nebezyzvestny*) Hayward. These traditional inverted honorifics all have their place on a carefully graded scale, and we both took some pride in seeing them applied to ourselves. Naturally, official Russia disapproved of him, and so too did British officialdom—to be fairer, the stuffier elements in the far more uptight British Foreign Office of many years ago. But though Max was by nature an enemy of all officials, his personal relations with them seem to have been generally excellent.

Soviet citizens all fell under his spell when they met him, and it made absolutely no difference whether they were loyalist or dissident. Their admiration was partly a tribute paid to the special artistry of his drinking style—I speak of his earlier and less abstemious years—by the citizens of a country where the overconsumption of alcohol has always been regarded as a supremely meritorious achievement, even when brought off in a manner infinitely less sophisticated than his. But what captivated his Soviet Russian friends still more was his understanding of their background, combined with an amused refusal to concede that their political and social dispensation added up to anything less than 100 percent absurdity.

For Western citizens sympathetic to the Soviet Union in the wrong way, as he saw it—whether they were categorizable as fellow travelers, parlor socialists, or radical chic-ists—he felt blistering contempt, and would occasionally depart from his usual courtesy to maul them with awesome brutality. Here was another bond between him and his many Soviet friends, since they fully shared his antagonism toward the run-of-the-mill Western Soviet-fancier. The reason for this was (according to Hayward) that no Soviet citizen can respect anyone who copies his own style of public utterance while wholly exempt from the political pressures obliging himself—but not the well-meaning Soviet-fancying foreigner—to make so many embarrassing and obviously untrue affirma-

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tions. Hayward once coined an elaborate conceit whereby he imaginatively transferred the conventional fellow-traveling approach from its traditional Soviet pabulum to an imaginary Hitlerite setting. When Western sympathizers would attempt, in his presence, to justify the horrors of Stalin's concentration camps as an economic necessity, he was apt to murmur, in what he thought were the appropriate simpering tones, a mock exculpation of atrocities no less vile as perpetrated in Auschwitz, Buchenwald, and Dachau. "What you must realize," he would make his imaginary Hitlerizing fellow traveler explain, "is that Germany had, at that time, *a perfectly genuine shortage of soap.*" The savage and macabre irony, combined with a passion for political common sense, was vintage Hayward.

He never liked being called an *anti-sovetchik* in the Soviet press, as he sometimes was, for he believed that the Kremlinite political and social amalgam was too ludicrous to merit any serious person's full-blooded antagonism; I have heard Pasternak express a similar sentiment. And yet Hayward was optimistic about the Soviet Union's future, repeatedly extrapolating some encouraging development until he saw the entire edifice collapsing amid expressions of general relief. When, in 1962, the Moscow branch of the Soviet Writers' Union somehow managed to conduct a genuine election unrigged by, and in defiance of, authority—heaving out a couple of hard-liners and elevating a couple of liberals to its board, he hailed this as a precedent of momentous importance. The trend would, he believed, catch on until the whole system eventually transformed itself. Nor is it easy to forget the zest with which he greeted the defection of Stalin's daughter, Svetlana Alliluyeva, to the West in 1966. His verdict: "The bottom has fallen out of the whole barrel of shit." The trouble was, though, it fell out so often.

Hayward was in his element with superpowers, and it was he who introduced me to the United States, passing on his own enthusiasm for the country. Manhattan was his favorite village, and he was established there when I first arrived on American soil. I put up at the same hotel, the Chelsea, while he introduced me to the natives and purveyed instruction in the language. Without his help I would never have known how to interpret the amiably ferocious query "On?" as uttered by the proprietor of a Twenty-third Street delicatessen in reply to my order for a pastrami sandwich. Instructed by Max, I at once knew that the answer should be "Rye" or "Pumpernickel." Soon I was fit to be allowed out on my own and was eating my eggs sunny-side up like anyone else. I quickly discovered that I had only to mention his name for all doors to be opened. "He cuts a wide swath here," someone told me. It was no overstatement.

Another aspect of Hayward became especially evident in New York, though it was in fact a worldwide phenomenon. Common acquaintances,

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not particularly conversant with either of us, would buttonhole me and start explaining what a wonderful, unique, splendid, compassionate, or even "truly warm" human being he was. In the case of coarser spirits this did not stop short of a strongly implied comparative evaluation and multiple insult: I, it was none too tactfully suggested, was strikingly less impressive. The suggestion might also be conveyed on these occasions that I, unlike the speaker, lacked the necessary insight and sensitivity to see how remarkable my brilliant friend was. Too many encounters of this sort could breed bemused irritation, from which (as I know) other close friends of Hayward have not been immune; it was not directed against him, of course, but against the cult that others made of him.

Turning now from Hayward himself to the aura around him, I can contribute little but puzzlement. Not that I was surprised when others relished his company, for I enjoyed it so much myself. But it is also true that I have much appreciated similarly engaging qualities in the small number of other close friends that I have been fortunate enough to make over the years. They, however, have all, without exception, failed to produce any similarly mesmeric—one might almost say messianic—impact on relative strangers.

What was it about his particular quality that made it more widely appreciated than that of others—some of them certainly no less gifted? There is no reason why this crux should be resolvable in rational terms. But were one to summon a computer to identify the salient characteristics differentiating Hayward from other close friends of my own, the printout would at least tell us that he (unlike the rest of us) was wholly free of domestic ties—and correspondingly exempt from financial trauma. This helped, perhaps, to inspire the proprietorial or even patronizing air that others adopted toward one who tantalized by a paradoxical combination of qualities. He was formidably self-sufficient, yes, but he was also (one seemed to sense) badly in need of being looked after. Who could call him lonely when he was so besieged by humanity that he felt impelled to maintain an unlisted telephone? Yet who could call him gregarious or socially fulfilled when he spent so much time alone? Was he vulnerable or impregnable, secure or insecure, happy or unhappy? And how did he react, in his heart, to the cult of his personality promoted by others? With distaste, secret pride, indifference? Did he deplore it, or did he secretly foster it in his own hyper-subtle way?

I shall hazard no answer to these questions. Indeed, it is possible that Hayward's special charisma derived in part from his capacity for remaining—even under the scrutiny of intimates and perhaps even to himself—far more of a mystery wrapped in an enigma than is the general run of humanity.

To the dependent-encumbered section among British academics,

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long ago singled out by administrative and fiscal malignancy for selective accelerated pauperization, the domestically unburdened Hayward, free as a bird, could easily have become the object of friendly envy in his later years. There he was, damn him, nonchalantly floating through the air from international airport to international airport, conferring with colleagues and the academic jet set in Munich, Jerusalem, Austin (Texas), and a dozen other intellectual centers; or holidaying in such places as Malta, Algeria, and the West Indies. From all these journeyings he would return with a quiverful of entertaining sociological insights. And yet, however cosmopolitan his program, he retained his English roots, as is illustrated by the following minor episode from his biography. He once chanced to be accosted, in Stockholm and in a version of the tongue of Shakespeare, by an amiable stranger who proved to be German and who wished to be directed somewhere or other in that city. When Hayward politely regretted that he was unable to help, the following exchange ensued.

INQUIRER (*very approximately*): *Ach so,* I see that you too a foreigner are, *nein?*

HAYWARD (*coldly*): No. I'm English.

The remark shows how insular, in an unguarded moment, even that least insular of Englishmen could become, and it was in this sense that he told the story against himself.

Hayward was not only an Englishman; he was also a northern Englishman, his roots being in the county of Yorkshire. He never paraded the fact, and it was not immediately obvious from his speech, but it was something that you could not forget once you had grasped it. As is well known (perhaps too well known), the northern English are, or pride themselves on being, direct, blunt, matter of fact, and the like—by contrast with the supposedly gibbering, twittering, devious southerner. The Yorkshireman in particular tends to resemble the Russian in that he will publicly award himself credit marks for spontaneity and sincerity—not uncommonly as part of the patter accompanying some intrigue or "con" of truly satanic ingenuity. Myself a southerner, at least by lifetime residence, I find these features strangely diverting, and have even adopted a northern persona while visiting Max in his native haunts near Sheffield. On these occasions we coined many a quaint northern gibe together at the expense of the decadent south. "Southern brass [money] is nobbut [nothing but] tin, and southern guts is nobbut pulp" is the only dictum that memory has preserved of what was for me a complex form of self-mocking badinage.

Though supremely urban, Hayward was known to undertake long country walks in his native Yorkshire hills, as I can witness. But he remained a townsman through and through, and I have another recollec-

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tion of him driving with me as far as Kyle of Lochalsh in Scotland, casting a bilious eye at the magical Isle of Skye a few minutes' ferry journey away across the narrow strait, flatly refusing to cross over to so boring a wilderness and insisting on turning south toward his metropolitan haunts.

This was the sequel to a riotous week that we had spent together in Edinburgh in the summer of 1962, participating—as the result of a characteristic burst of adventurousness on Hayward's part—in the city's celebrated annual festival. One morning in Oxford he had chanced to read in his newspaper that two venerable Soviet writers, Mikhail Sholokhov and Ilya Ehrenburg, had been prevented at the last moment from attending the International Writers' Conference which was to be a feature of the Edinburgh festivities of that year and which indeed had begun on that very day. Quick to realize that the defection of those notabilities would leave a double vacuum at the heart of Scotland's capital, now otherwise crammed to capacity with cultural celebrants, Hayward decided that it would be amusing for him and me to fill it; and so he rang me up and insisted on my driving him north at a moment's notice. From telephone booths on the way he made the necessary arrangements with the organizers (whom he knew) whereby he and I were, in a sense, to represent the Soviet Union at this international conference table. The other participants were established literary luminaries of the Western world. Temporarily promoted to this constellation of creative talent and good company, Max and I represented the Soviet Union fully and adequately only to this extent—that we took over the lavish accommodations and hospitality (which included never allowing us to be more than a foot or two from a whiskey bottle) previously earmarked for the two distinguished missing Soviet participants. We were also able to enjoy the general amenities of the festival.

It was while doing so at a wild party—perhaps exceptionally boisterous by the standards of the Athens of the North—that I came nearest to witnessing in person one of those outrageous scenes (in Russian, *skandaly*) that the Hayward of those days was always provoking in the world's capital cities and elsewhere. While I myself was unsuccessfully seeking to capture the attention of some young woman of startling beauty, he was being thrown—literally, abruptly, headfirst, and wholly without provocation or preliminaries of any sort—down the steep, characteristically Edinburghian stone staircase of the premises where these jollifications were taking place, and by an internationally eminent man of letters who shall remain nameless. Only Hayward's preternaturally limp condition saved him from serious injury, as he maintained on appearing in somewhat battered condition and relating the incident the following morning. To be thrown downstairs! That was outdoing even

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Russian literature, where writers invoke this hackneyed topic often enough (*Ya vas spushchu s lestnitsy*, "I shall throw you downstairs"), but usually without the dire threat reaching the point of physical implementation even on the pages of their novels—not to mention in real life and by themselves in person! It was as if Hayward had been chosen by fate, not merely to act out the more unseemly passages of Gogol and Dostoevski, but even to out-act them, like some latter-day Akaky Akakiyevich Bashmachkin or Yakov Petrovich Golyadkin writ even larger.

Though Max was a formidable linguist, there was one tongue in which he was less versed than many of his generation: ancient Greek. It happened that he did not study classics at school or university, which was almost unheard of for an arts-oriented English student of the 1930s as gifted as he. Nor was it until many years later that he repaired the deficiency. It began when he paid what was to have been a brief visit to the now fashionable island of Spetsai in the Aegean, and was found so generally acceptable by the residents and natives that he was persuaded, despite his well-known bias in favor of urban life, to build a small villa there. His last years thus came to be divided between Oxford, Manhattan, and a Greek island. He swiftly ingested modern Greek as a matter of course, and soon discovered that the language of Plato was not very dissimilar from the speech of his Spetsiot cleaning lady. That he should expand on this philological base was inevitable. On first visiting the Peloponnese, he delightedly discovered that the locals still pronounced their etas Doric fashion, as long alphas, just as they had in Aristophanes' plays. Soon he was deep in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and was propounding an ingenious solution of the Homeric problem. Almost his last remark made to me was to correct a line of Sappho, δέδφκε μὲν ἀ σελάννα ("the moon has set"), that I had misquoted to the extent of attributing an Attic rough breathing to the monosyllabic penultimate word, as pronounced unaspirated—Max absorbed such things through osmosis—by sixth-century Lesbians of all sexes.

In invoking Hayward's Hellenic interests and Spetsiot period I am running ahead of my narrative, for these things belong to his later life. They remind me, too, that I must not pass over in complete silence the profound change that his personality progressively underwent during the period covering some ten to fourteen years before his death. Let us sum it up by saying that he became strikingly less self-indulgent than he had been in his unobtrusively hectic prime. The change included giving up nicotine, alcohol, the provocation of such improprieties as are illustrated above, and the frequent company of some old friends, such as myself, who had previously been far more ascetic than he in their habits but now found themselves markedly less so. We still met, without restraint, and always on the most affable terms. But he was somehow just not there. He

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was now making new friends, who—from my point of view—could hardly be said to have known the real Max at all; but they, no doubt, might feel that they had the right to say the same of me and other associates of his middle years.

Meanwhile the cult of his persona or simulacrum, which had long tended to bore me into a state of deep narcosis, went marching on as if so fundamental and indeed heroic a swerve in life's course had never been imposed.

"The moon has set." Sappho's words, quoted above, conjure up the early months of 1979 when Max lay dying in a hospital belonging to the British National Health system—a hospital which splendidly vindicated, in the skilled care taken of him, that (often justifiably) much-abused service. He tackled the business of leaving this world with his customary dignity, and with such style as will surely be an inspiration to all who witnessed it. The distinction and variety of the visitors who flew in from many countries to see him was not such as to distract him from his older friends; for he somehow miraculously restored the former intimacy and affection in a moment of time, so that we were able to enjoy many hours of incomparable talk during my visits, while he lay back—witty, insouciant, abrasive as ever, even in his mortal sickness.

Did he know that he was dying? He preserved, or simulated, all along the confident assumption that he would recover, and did so with unruffled consistency. This was not, I think, because he believed it but because it was the way in which he had chosen to depart, for he surely realized at a fairly early stage that, in the words of a lyric by Pasternak, "he was unlikely to get out of the business alive." One was never conscious of this prospect when talking to him, though, for he was just as good company on his sickbed as he had been when living life to the full—and this despite suffering (I suspect) far more pain than he would permit his guests to realize. A refrigerator stocked with champagne, hock, caviar, smoked salmon, and other delicacies bestowed by friends and admirers enabled him to hold a number of intimate, hilarious, and delicious lunch and dinner parties. He was unfailingly equable, mordant and stimulating, not least upon receiving, at so incongruous a juncture, a threat from the local income tax authorities to distrain upon his property; he remarked that they were welcome to ransack the refrigerator. As for other belongings, I hardly think he had any in Oxford apart from his books, clothes, and a battered typewriter.

I learned of his death—which came abruptly—on the campus of Loyola University, New Orleans, from the Russian poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko, to whom Max had introduced me many years earlier and who had been one of the last to visit him in the hospital.

When presenting the first of my two books on Dostoevski (whom we

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both adored) to Max Hayward many years ago, I wrote the following dedication in Russian:

Meksu: skandalovedu o skandalovede ot skandaloveda.

It does not translate well, but might be rendered "To Max: from one connoisseur of improprieties to another about a third." I think it worth ending with this because he met the greatest impropriety of all with the same mocking high spirits in which he experienced, provoked, observed, charted, and recounted all the other unseemlinesses and absurdities that littered and embellished his own life while enhancing, through him, the lives of others.

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The Machine in the Library

RUTH GAY

ON JANUARY 1, 1981, THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS will close its card catalogue and with that act bring to an end a century-old system for the organization of knowledge. The consequences, as with many innovations, can only be surmised as we begin to disentangle the system from the substance of our thought. Most simply, the change means that large academic libraries across the country will "close" or "freeze" their card catalogues and fit out their halls with microfiche readers or computer consoles. (When the words are used strictly, which is not always the case, a library that "closes" its catalogue will continue to file additions to serials. Nothing will be added to a "frozen" catalogue.)

As at all such moments of parting, it seems appropriate to consider what we are losing, and to assess its value. Familiar and inevitable as the card catalogue now seems, it is a relatively new tool in the history of human knowledge, and likely to prove the most short-lived. Until the nineteenth century, libraries customarily kept and printed their catalogues in book form. With the proliferation of books, however, the printed catalogue of any library was obsolete as soon as it was set in type and librarians began to keep records on slips of paper—each representing a single book—which they filed in drawers. In contrast to the printed catalogue, the drawers of slips provided librarians with a complete, up-to-date record of their holdings, because they could interfile new records with old. For public use, the slips were transcribed onto more durable cards, and in old libraries the fortunate reader can still come upon an occasional relic of those days, finely written in very black ink. In the United States, both the Boston Public Library and the Philadelphia Library were using card catalogues by the 1850s, and by the 1890s the catalogue was a widely used, though not yet standardized, finding device. Cards varied from 1 1/2″ × 5″ to postcard size. Nonetheless, it was an obvious and irresistible convenience which became even more inevitable when the Library of Congress began printing its cards for sale to smaller libraries. This service, which spared libraries the expense of original cataloguing and of manufacturing their own cards, not only drew them into the Li-

✪RUTH GAY is a cataloguer in the Manuscripts and Archives Department of the Yale University Library. Her articles have appeared in *Commentary*, *Horizon*, *Dialogue*, and other magazines.

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brary of Congress's scheme of organization but also provided a map to the existing universe of knowledge.

Every age, of course, has made its own map, defined its hierarchies, and educated its young accordingly. When the Library of Congress was founded in 1815, it began with a bequest of 6,487 books from Thomas Jefferson to the nation. This collection had been classified by Jefferson according to principles derived from Bacon and d'Alembert, paralleling systems widely used in European libraries, and new books continued to be added in Jefferson's categories until the end of the nineteenth century.

By the time the Library had grown large and important enough to warrant a new building in 1897, it had collected more than one million items, among them a backlog of thirty years of uncatalogued books and pamphlets. Beginning on August 2, 1897, the transfer of some 950,000 catalogued books and pamphlets to the new building was accomplished in ten weeks. A more serious problem was moving the backlog, which the administration decided to treat as an opportunity for some rough classification as the books were being shelved. The two chief librarians, working after hours until two in the morning, Sundays, and holidays, themselves moved the remainder between December 1897 and the following March, arranging the books by "countries, department and sets"—a kind of direct action that seems almost unimaginable in contemporary life. This Herculean labor pressed them into rethinking their categories, balancing between classical schemes, such as Bacon's, and modern ones which encompassed new fields of learning and new relationships. Their aim, wrote Charles Martel, who became head of the Library in 1901, was "to facilitate the use of the library by the orderly arrangement of the books in divisions corresponding to the literature existing upon various subjects, classed within each department of science according to their relation as established in bibliographical systems of classification. . . ." This was a real break with the Jeffersonian-Baconian tradition, indeed with long-standing European traditions of classifying books according to hierarchies of knowledge.

The Library of Congress did not need to start from the beginning, however, since a number of new schemes designed on pragmatic principles were already in use in American libraries. The most popular was the Dewey Decimal System, then already a quarter of a century old, which recommended itself by its elaborately worked out printed scheme and the neatness of its notation. The disadvantage of the system for a large library lay exactly in this neatness, because it forced all disciplines, however large or small, into the same straitjacket: ten divisions subdivided again by ten. Melvil Dewey's passion for order, which seems to have begun when as a small boy he first arranged his mother's spices in

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her kitchen, continued to prevail over an interest in ideas. But marshaling the luxuriant growth of knowledge into his tidy scheme was even then beginning to create difficulties in the sciences. These drawbacks and others led the Library of Congress to seek its own solution.

Beginning work in 1901, the several expert committees published their schemes of classification piecemeal during the next decade, and with minor variations these have remained in use to this day. Using twenty-three letters of the alphabet to denote the main fields—such as H for social sciences, L for education, P for language and literature, R for medicine—the committees devised outlines for each area of knowledge which reflected not only, as Martel wrote, "the literature existing," but also, quite unintentionally, the political, social, and intellectual currents of the period. Psychology, for example, though now a major American industry, will always be an interloper in the B schedule, which was originally divided between philosophy and religion. The natural sciences also have had to carve out new territories and establish new terms for themselves. (The original 1904 scheme did not include biology.) Testimony to the capaciousness of the Library of Congress outline, however, is that it has been able to accommodate additions without complex notation.

Close analysis of fields of knowledge is expressed physically in the compact groupings of related books on the shelves. The reader very rapidly discerns some of the larger patterns: that American history is arranged chronologically or that works on poverty are all in section HV. What he does not know is that the cataloguer's handbook subsumes "The Poor" under social pathology.

The Social Science schedule, H, which includes both economics and sociology, displays most fully the way the learned at the turn of the century studied society and judged its structure, its morals, and its lapses. Despite the rise of historicism, despite the pioneering effort of anthropologists to suspend judgment in reporting on culture, the Library of Congress classifiers could not free themselves from the categories of their society. We see, to begin with, a Christian country which regards non-Christian groups (HN 40) as "Special" and lists there Buddhists (.B5), Jews (.J5), and Muslims (.M6). In categorizing problems, the authors of the outline also reflected the judgment of society on what was acceptable and unacceptable social behavior. Under "Abnormal Sex Relations" we find such categories as "Homosexuality," "Prostitution," "Masturbation," and "Sexual Perversion in Women." The last topic was dropped in 1969 when "Lesbianism" was substituted for it.

The schedule also makes careful distinction between classes arising from birth and classes arising from occupation. In American society, where apparently class is based on occupation, there is no room for the traditional European tripartite division. In the H schedule there are only

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the working class ("Proletariate") and the middle class, divided according to the source of their wealth into agricultural, industrial, commercial, and professional. From class it is only a step to "Race," assigned the numbers HT 1501–1600 and reserved for "the race as a social group, race conflicts, the protection and development of lower races." In light of the history of the last half century, it is hard even to read the categories without an acute sense of discomfort: HT 1577 Aryan; HT 1581 Negro, Hamitic; HT 1575 Caucasic. In 1977, four decades after Nazism had permanently polluted the word "Aryan," the Library of Congress decided to abandon the subject and referred readers to "Indo-Aryans, Indo-Europeans or Indo-Iranians."

Similarly, in the large class HV Social Pathology there are embedded ideas about society which do not truly accept the Christian expectation (despite section HN) that the poor will always be with us. Even free medical services, public assistance, and relief are regarded as aspects of social pathology. Many of the euphemisms that we have grown accustomed to, as ways of sheltering ourselves from certain realities, are here set out quite plainly: "Unmarried Mother" instead of "Teenage Mother," the "Aged" instead of "Senior Citizens," "Defectives" instead of the "Handicapped," a topic which throws together the deaf, the dumb, the feebleminded, and the insane. "Degeneration" follows hard upon "Defectives," including "Degeneration and Insanity" and its near neighbor, "Degeneration and Genius," "Inbreeding" (presumably the cause of it all), and "Mixed Marriages." Social Pathology covers not only the indecently poor and the indecent; it also includes practices such as alcoholism, the tobacco habit, and drug addiction, now regarded as afflictions rather than as faults. In the category of "Criminal Classes," a major feature of social pathology, we also find political crime, so that the memoirs of political prisoners, who are today regarded as almost secular saints, are not far from the confessions of a murderer. Another indication of changes in social attitudes is the category "Offenses Against Public Morals," which includes gambling, horse racing, lotteries, and prizefighting, now major methods of raising state revenue. In the stacks, however, banners of blame and shame do not wave over the shelves, and the paradox is that the reader studying gambling, for instance, only perceives a convenient and logically arranged cluster of books.

Although the makers of the history schedule had a more straightforward task than the social scientists, the passage of time and the survival of what were then widely held ideas have combined to create certain anomalies. According to the Library of Congress arrangement, Europe still basks in the autumnal days of the Edwardian Age. Schedule D proceeds majestically from the general (historiography and world history) through the continents to individual countries, laying out the polit-

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ical history of each as the framework for the arrangement of books. The colossus of Russia is denoted by DK, and it is startling today to see how much of the old Russian empire in the schedule is once again under Russian domination. Time falls away. Despite two world wars, complex changes of boundaries, periods of self-determination, and the achievement of independence, Poland and Finland remain subsections of DK. So, too, do the Baltic states, which—despite their brief period of freedom—are herded together in subsection DK 511 ("Provinces, governments, republics, regions, etc."). In this long list of towns, lakes, seas, and other geographical features of Russia we find, as in the time of the Romanovs, Estonia (.E4–8), Latvia (.L15–18), and Lithuania (.L2–28).

The Austro-Hungarian empire, too, is in its full majesty, extending over twenty-five pages of classification with numbers DB 1–975. Still under Hapsburg rule, we find the provinces of Czechoslovakia (DB 191–217), Bosnia (DB 231–35), Croatia and Slavonia (DB 361–380), Hungary (DB 901–975), and Transylvania (DB 721–740), not to mention the Sudetenland in DB 705. A passionate irredentist might be startled to find Trieste (DB 32) as an unredeemed part of the Austro-Hungarian empire rather than in the all-Italian DG. As memories of quieter times, Albania, Macedonia, and Thessalonica are treated as localities of Turkey, while Vietnam and Cambodia remain as part of French Indochina.

Sometimes, as in the classification of the Jews, the scheme reflects a series of breathtaking decisions on history and destiny. To begin with, the schedule accepts Jewish historical claims to Israel by placing the Jews in Asia (DS) and assigning them the numbers 120–151. It then comes down firmly for a Messianic view of Jewish history. In the judgment of the Library of Congress, all of Jewish post-exilic history is classed under the single number DS 135, as a "Special topic, Jews outside of Palestine," and then arranged alphabetically with prefixes for temporary Jewish stopping places—.B2 for Babylonia; .B3, Balkan Peninsula; .G3–5, Germany; .Y4, Yemen. Two thousand years of Jewish life in Iran or Germany is, according to the long view of the Library of Congress, only a moment in the history of exile. In the New World, however, the old dispensation fails and American Jews are subsumed under their own country. Once again there seems to be an inescapable political judgment which makes American Jewish history part of American history, but which places the Jews of the rest of the world in a condition of perpetual alienation.

It is important to realize that there are actually two worlds of classification in the Library of Congress system: (1) the invisible world of its subject schedules, which are a map to the arrangement of the books on the shelves; and (2) the visible world of the card catalogue, which de-

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scribes the physical work and its subjects. Thus a biography of Einstein may also have cards under physics, mathematics, and perhaps even politics.

The Library of Congress cards expressed these two worlds both by cataloguing the books and by assigning subjects according to a strictly defined terminology. Great Britain, for example, is always Great Britain to the Library of Congress and never the United Kingdom. The main innovation in using subjects in conjunction with the catalogue card was that it was a way of getting around an intractable physical fact: that any one book could only stand in one place on a shelf no matter how many subjects it touched on. By duplicating the main card, the librarian could provide many points of access to the same work.

Yet these subject headings, much like the scheme of organization which they express, also suffered from the aging process. We can see technological development in the subject catalogue as "Moving Picture Plays" were changed to "Moving Pictures" and then later to "Films," or as "Electronic Calculating Machines" became "Computers." The upheaval in the streets in the 1960s brought in its wake political changes in the Library of Congress catalogue, although the Vietnam war always remained the "Vietnam Conflict." In 1970 the term "Afro-Americans" replaced "Negroes," while "Blacks" was reserved for those outside the United States. Students of social change might be interested in tracking down the date when "Mental Health" replaced "Mental Hygiene," or when libraries using the subject "Chastity" dropped the "see also" reference to "Single People."

The charms and idiosyncrasies of this system endured unquestioned until the 1950s, when two kinds of problems began to demand attention: the physical and the intellectual. After a half century of growth, most academic libraries had developed huge catalogues which were cumbersome for the reader to manipulate, expensive to maintain, and—what was more serious—were beginning to deteriorate. Cards were becoming dog-eared, and broken corners frequently carried away part of the information. However accommodating the Library of Congress classification schedules had been, however rapidly new subjects had been added, there finally came a time when the overwhelming size of the entire apparatus threatened to overwhelm both librarians and readers. This situation was further complicated in 1967 when libraries adopted the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules—a system which was meant to standardize cataloguing procedure but which actually left many libraries with the choice of entirely revising their existing catalogues or bringing them into conformity by adopting the new procedure parallel with the old. When the rules were revised and issued in a second edition in 1978, the struggle for consistency seemed entirely hopeless.

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Under these circumstances, it was inevitable that the new technology for record keeping and new methods of microreproduction should appear an attractive and efficient way out of the morass, giving libraries better control over their resources and offering readers quicker access to library holdings. In academic libraries that are now multimillion-dollar operations, record keeping has long been under computer control. Moving from computer control of financial records to computer control of bibliographic records does not seem like much of a step. When the libraries began to look for help to machinery which would produce microimages of decaying and cumbersome printed matter (for example, old newspapers), and for machinery which would keep track of both books and records, they turned to industry for help. The experts invited to survey existing methods called them "the way of the dinosaur," but also held out the tempting thought that a mere "500 to 1 reduction ratio . . . permits recording the entire contents of a large library in a few hundred square feet of office space. So in principle, the capability to dispense with library buildings and disseminate library materials more widely has been with us for a long time." By increasing reduction ratios, a library could ultimately record a thousand books on an area no larger than the head of a pin. At a point when the Library of Congress holdings filled 270 miles of shelving, reducing them to even a whole paper of pins began to look inviting.

Beyond the problems of inconsistencies in cataloguing—with their attendant classification and retrieval problems—libraries were finding it impossible to keep up with the flood of printed matter. By 1972 the University of California at Berkeley estimated that its catalogue held four million author/title cards and two million subject cards. In 1977 the libraries at Yale were wrestling with nearly 34,000,000 cards and were cataloguing some 134,000 titles annually. As of 1979 the Library of Congress, with 20,000,000 cards in its catalogue, was spending over one million dollars on salaries of staff members who only filed new cards. When the Library announced in November 1977 that it would freeze its card catalogue as of January 1980 (later postponed to 1981) and go to the computer for all cataloguing, the news was greeted as confirmation of the inevitable. Here was an opportunity for many libraries to make a fresh start in their subject categories while gaining firm control over new acquisitions.

Actually, in the back rooms of libraries the transition from the card catalogue to the computer has been in process for more than a decade. As early as 1967, several large networks had been formed by cooperating libraries to centralize cataloguing, to supply instant bibliographic information, and to produce catalogue cards. One of the major networks, the Ohio College Library Center (OCLC), maintains a "data base" (a term

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used for the total collection of information stored in a computer) with over four million records, including entries provided by the Library of Congress. Another consortium, the Research Libraries Information Network (RLIN), also has computer records from the Library of Congress and original cataloguing from its member universities, among them Stanford, Berkeley, Yale, and Columbia. Because of their commitment to the card catalogue, however, the member libraries are not yet using these systems to the fullest extent—which would mean giving the reader direct access to the data base. Paradoxically, one of the main functions of these systems at present is to print conventional cards which are still being filed in the ongoing public catalogues. The ominous date of January 1, 1981, when the catalogues are to close, will make very little difference to the working part of the library. It will only mean that the machine can come out of the closet.

For the present, most libraries maintain a facade of tranquillity and continuity, although a few have moved ahead into the machine-readable age. Readers at the University of Toronto are now using computer terminals to locate books, and the University of Oregon Library has filmed its catalogue and produced it on microfiche. The microfiche catalogue is of particular interest because it is widely expected to be the interim step between cards and the reader's direct confrontation with the cathode-ray tube (CRT in the new terminology). Here and there, other libraries are already using microfiche or microfilm for special catalogues. A union catalogue of the holdings of a group of divinity libraries, for example, is available on microfiche. Subscribing libraries, not yet mechanized, can and do place a fiche reader and the box of cards in their public catalogue rooms as another bibliographic aid. What now seems an exotic research tool, however, is about to become standard.

Although this development now seems inexorable, the glad capitulation of libraries to the machine is not entirely explained by necessity. It is also a consequence of the changing character of library administration. Libraries have come very far from the day when they were the exclusive preserve of scholars, both as users and as administrators. Today the great university libraries continue to serve the scholarly community, but they are administered by a growing cadre of technicians, professionally trained to manage libraries. Understandably this group has a greater interest in organizational structure, in budgets, and in the fine use of hardware than in scholarship. Where administration itself is the name of the game, the head of the library models his operation on the factory—proving, in his annual report, his canny way with capital expenses, maintenance costs, and production statistics. Small wonder that the flight to machines has taken place without a tear or a backward glance.

The main preoccupation of large libraries these days is less on build-

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ing their collections than on how much hardware they can acquire. Using cooperative buying (predicated on interlibrary loan) and cooperative cataloguing, library budgets show curious anomalies: reductions in expenditures for books and increases in expenditures for machinery.

In 1979, at the winter meeting of the American Library Conference, twenty-three major research libraries in the United States announced that they would close their card catalogues on varying schedules from 1980 to 1984. Despite the nearness of these dates, the mechanics of the changeover are not entirely clear. How to get the researcher and the data base together is more complicated than installing a few terminals in some available public space. One serious problem is how to educate a whole generation of researchers to use the machines. While scientists have long been accustomed to "talking" to computers, the practice has been less common in the humanities and libraries will need time to teach the techniques. In addition, the usefulness of the computer, like any machine, will depend on the skill of the operator, and it may well be that reference departments will have to undertake the more complex searches. Nonetheless, a look into the future suggests the transformation of libraries into structures resembling airline terminals, with call numbers instead of flight numbers flashing across the screen.

Ultimately, say the computer technicians, they can retrieve anything from a single title to an entire subject bibliography. Since terminals are expensive and designs for the data bases are still not complete, many libraries are contemplating an interim catalogue in microfiche form, which has a relatively simple and familiar technology and will give them a breathing space in which to make the transition from the printed card to the data bank.

Whatever the method they choose, however, the reader will always have to consult two catalogues in order to get a complete overview of a subject: the card catalogue for retrospective material, and the fiche or the terminal for new material. For the sciences, of course, where so much research is based on journal articles, the retrospective search is rarely necessary; also in many areas of the social sciences, research is based on current data and documents.

Librarians are justly apprehensive about "reader acceptance" of the new technology, and a number of studies with wonderfully contradictory results have already been made to measure the public reaction in advance. The University of Oregon discovered, to no one's surprise, that acceptance varied inversely with age, and that the faculty was most grumpy about it all. At Ohio State, however, readers preferred using the terminal to the card catalogue. A lighthearted touch and little "hype" may go a long way toward bridging the difficulties. When the B. Dalton book chain opened a new store in New York in July 1979, it also in-

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troduced a computer terminal, playfully named Book Rogers. Customers were entertained by it, and one author was described as "entranced" at being able to discover her sales figures from the computer.

While it is amusing to have a console screen in a bookstore light up with facts and figures, it becomes something different as a working tool. For serious scholars, understandably, what is involved in the closing of catalogues is the disappearance of a major piece of their working apparatus—not only the physical disappearance of the drawers and ranks of cards, but even a reorganization of the intellectual categories that they have learned to manipulate. When all the figures about the ten thousand volumes dancing on the head of a pin have been cleared away, some very simple and rather brutal questions remain: How comfortable is it to use micro-images? How long can a reader stare at a screen? Is watching lines of type appear on a screen faster than flipping through a drawer of cards?

Since the library of the future will undoubtedly be short on printed aids and long on mechanical devices, the physical consequences of the shimmering green cathode-ray tube, the domino squares of microfiche, or the palely loitering sheets of machine-readable printouts arouse a certain anxiety. In the last year I have looked deep into the eye of the tube, squinted at microfiche, and studied printouts. And my verdict, in a word, is that it all spells eyestrain.

This is not a very progressive point of view, nor is it the whole story. Yet it is hard to believe that after five hundred years of the cultivation of printing, of the sedulous search for clarity and beauty in typefaces, the results should all be abandoned for something that only a machine can read. In humans it induces a process closer to decipherment than reading. Only those who have known the pleasures and surprises of browsing through catalogue drawers can understand the deprivation awaiting a generation which will be treated to the most schematic typography, often with only capital letters. But it is barely legitimate for a society feeling a serious material pinch to mourn for aesthetic niceties. "Information specialists" rather than typographers will now call the tune.

Perhaps it is more legitimate to worry about the physical price that we will pay for the new machines. The strain of reading banks of information through the unsteady light of the console screen, the boredom of waiting while line after line is produced in response to a request, the expense of getting information in "hard copy"—all make the mechanical catalogue more a headache to the scholar than the technological marvel that its creators believe it to be. Sometimes information specialists appear so absorbed in their machines that they have forgotten the wonderful power of the partnership between the human eye and the human brain. For people who are used to reading or scanning drawers of cards,

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any mechanical printer will be too slow. The format of a printed card, with its capitals, heavy and light type, spacing, and indentation, makes it possible for the experienced researcher to find instantly the information he wants. By contrast, the undifferentiated blocks of machine-readable type that appear on the screen or on fiche offer very little visual aid and are correspondingly laborious to use. These physical problems, which are only irritants during a brief search, are compounded for anyone who is attempting to compose a bibliography or is involved in a complex investigation.

Even assuming that the reader has managed to get the best of both worlds—all the information the computer will disgorge in the form of a substantial printout on permanent and stable paper—his troubles are not over. The very long printout in the classical accordion fold reminds us that we have not only abandoned five hundred years of typography, we have also abandoned what was once thought to be a great advance over the clay tablet and the scroll: namely, the bound book. The only difference between wrestling with a printout and wallpapering a room is that at least the printout isn't sticky. But then it's not as pretty as wallpaper.

While the computer can be thought of as a willing and tireless servant, it is also a very stupid one. I can see researchers in despair in front of their consoles exclaiming like Hamlet, "How absolute the knave is. We must speak by the card or equivocation will undo us." While exactness is just what one wants in getting the call number of a book, an ambiguously worded subject may find the stunned researcher watching a long, irrelevant bibliography unfold before his eyes. At a demonstration recently, the operator wanted to show how all the titles of a series could be collected in one list. She typed "Bolingen" on the keyboard and after a pause only one title appeared on the screen. Murmurs. Everyone knew that there should have been a long list of distinguished books. We looked again and realized that the operator had misspelled Bollingen and was getting the single entry in the data base that had been misspelled in exactly the same way by a keypunch operator. Of course, such errors are not unique to computers, but the disembodied nature of computer information, summoned like so many genii out of a bottle, and the interposition of a keyboard between the need and the fact can only strengthen the sense of the elusive nature of the information. Existing only as an electrical impulse, without form until the researcher presses the right keys, its being takes on almost a metaphysical character. Only the right code word will release the treasure. This emphasis on exactness deprives scholars in the humanities of what they call, too lightly, "serendipity." Where books or cards are physically grouped together, researchers straying over the boundary to a neighboring category will often come upon unlooked-for and valuable material, or a suggestion for a new tan-

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gent. These accidents are by now part of the creative process.

The potential problem lies in the difference between what the system is designed to do, which is to find data and retrieve it, and methods of research in the humanities. Here, unlike the sciences, targets are often broad and data ill defined. It is not surprising, therefore, that for nearly two decades the sciences have found computers a natural solution to their need for current and exact information. By now the indexes to journals, abstracts of articles, and other searching tools are taken for granted. One of the oldest systems, MEDLARS, operated by the National Library of Medicine, is sometimes reported sensationally in the press when it turns up, just in the nick of time, the remedy for a rare and potentially fatal disease.

Wherever inquiry permits the user to pinpoint his topic exactly, the computer is invaluable. The legal profession, for example, uses a computer system called LEXIS to retrieve information on cases and decisions. But research in the humanities does not usually have the advantage of precision. A narrow search on a computer is not likely to be very enlightening, while a broad one is often wasteful. As the situation now stands, there seems to be a basic problem of compatibility between the machine and the scholar. For the present, it may well be that scholars will have to revise their methods, demanding only simple information from the data base and browsing through printed bibliographies for more suggestive material. True, one could "browse" through a data base by patiently asking it a long series of questions, but this is a tedious, time-comsuming, and unpleasant process compared to turning pages or looking at printed cards. It is also expensive. Every second of computer time must be paid for, and printouts cost extra.

When we and the system are older we may learn how to get on better with the computer—to coax information out of it that perhaps we would not have thought to ask in the first stages of our acquaintance. Without wishing to anthropomorphize further, it is hard to see the computer as other than a difficult presence.

In Israel, at the research center in Rehovot, the computer is called the Golem, a reference to the clay giant brought to life by the sixteenth-century Rabbi Loew of Prague. The image of the Golem as an obedient, uncomprehending, yet possibly menacing figure very neatly represents the apprehensions of many scholars who wonder about the reliability of their new servant, the computer. That, of course, remains to be tested. But one thing is certain: scholarship will never be the same.

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Donne Ch'avete Inteletto d'Amore

(An elegy for the American School System)

JOHN CIARDI

Mary and I were having an emotion.
"Thank you for having this emotion with me,"
Mary said, "I needed a reinforcement
of my identity through an interaction.
Have you accomplished a viable realization?"

"I know it was a formative experience,"
I said to Mary, "and yet, as I critique it
at my own level, I still feel under-achieved."

Mary touched me thoughtfully—reassurance
through personal contact. "Yes," she said, "I see."

"Is that susceptible of remediation?"
I said to Mary. Mary looked at the clock.
"I have a class to teach in an hour," she said.
"Do you feel you can wait?" —"Of course," I said, "if
I must.
But frustration is always negative. May I suggest
a release-therapy impromptu now,
and a more fully structured enactment later?"

"All right," said Mary. We had a quick emotion.
"Was that an acceptable quick emotion?" I said.
"I do not wish to seem non-supportive," said Mary,
"but since you ask, permit me to stress the point

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that an optimal interpersonal encounter
must emphasize mutuality.—Where are my pants?"

"Shall I drive you to class?" I said as she was dressing.
"A truly empathetic response," said Mary,
"and approval is to be strongly indicated
as tendency reinforcement in trait-development.
But might it not be even more constructive
for you to sit here and to introspect
a clarification of your personal goals?"

"It will also give me a chance to shower," I said.

"*Mens sana in corpore sano,*" she said at the door.
"I shall be looking forward to relating fully
To your raised consciousness." And she smiled and left.

O intellect of love, may I prove worthy!

JOHN CIARDI's latest book is *Limericks: Too Gross,* which he co-authored with Isaac Asimov. *For Instance,* a collection of poems, will be published this fall by W. W. Norton.

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Negative Pluses

A. R. AMMONS

One whose impulses are
received, encouraged
by the world finds
a place to put down cool,
settle: one who when
he touches down feels the
burn of difference,
exclusion must
like a hoped-for fusion
system
suspend his reactions
midair: this involves
centering radially
many sides, a skinless air mass
that drops down
and bounds up again
risking loops
gravity might not recover from:
one in this wise
develops rotundity of preparation
and defense, an undue
awareness of transience,
and a sense of place complex
enough to represent reality
and simple enough
to be profoundly clear.

✪ A. R. AMMONS's *Selected Longer Poems* is forthcoming from W. W. Norton.

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BIBLIOMANIA

The Great Copernicus Chase

OWEN GINGERICH

When my astrophysicist friends ask me why I no longer compute model stellar atmospheres, I tell them that I'm the victim of anniversaries. In 1971 the astronomer Johannes Kepler had his four hundredth birthday, closely followed by the Copernican quinquecentennial in 1973. As an astronomer with strong historical interests, I knew I would be expected to have an opinion on these men, but I hoped, by taking at least a small look at some original sources, to avoid the time-honored clichés about their lives and discoveries.

Kepler was an enthusiast, a man who wrote a five-foot shelf of books and who left scores of surviving letters and unexamined manuscripts. In contrast, Copernicus was essentially a one-book author. No personal letters survive, and precious few working manuscripts. To study Copernicus means studying his *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium*, a formidably technical treatise published in 1543, just in time to reach the Polish astronomer on his deathbed.

But did anyone really read Copernicus's magnum opus? He wrote in an age when merely being able to understand Ptolemy's *Almagest* was considered the highest achievement of an astronomer. Copernicus's own treatise, heavily dependent on Ptolemy's fourteen-hundred-year-old work, was no easier to read. It is entirely possible that more people alive today have read through *De revolutionibus* than in the entire sixteenth century. Or so my fellow Copernicanist, Gerald Ravetz, and I decided in a bull session one night in York in 1970.

Two days after that discussion, I found myself at the Royal Observatory in Edinburgh, and there I took the occasion to examine its first edition Copernicus. To my astonishment, the book was carefully annotated from beginning to end. If there were so few knowledgeable readers in the sixteenth century, then by no decent probability should I have found so quickly a copy with errors perceptively marked to the very last page. As I weighed the possibilities, it occurred to me that, by an improbable chance, I might just have in hand a copy from the small group of Lutheran scholars who were responsible for getting the book printed.

There was, first, young Georg Joachim Rheticus, the twenty-two-year-old radical professor who went off to northern Poland to persuade the aging and reluctant Copernicus to publish his work. I call him a radical because anyone who adopted heliocentrism in those days had to be something of a revolutionary, but it was more than that. Neither Joachim nor Rheticus (meaning "from the Rhine") was his real family name. He was christened Iserin, but when he was still a teenager, his father was charged with sorcery and beheaded, and the lad was forced to adopt a new name. Later on, after he was driven from his post as astronomy professor at Leipzig following a drunken homosexual incident, he left astronomy and became a medical doctor. As a doctor he adopted Paracelsianism, which in medicine was just as radical as heliocentrism was in astronomy. If a little more biographical data were available, Rheticus would make a prime subject for a psychobiography.

In any event, the well-annotated *De revolutionibus* I had found in Edinburgh had not been worked over by Rheticus. I might have pinned down the annotator more promptly had I seen, on folio 96, a Latin note citing "Our Joachim . . . ," clearly a reference by

✪ OWEN GINGERICH is an astrophysicist at the Smithsonian Observatory and professor of astronomy and history of science at Harvard University.

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one of his near-colleagues. As it was, I soon found the owner's initials stamped among the decorations on the cover: E R S, which I eventually realized stood for Erasmus Reinhold Salveldensis—that is, Erasmus Reinhold from Saalfeld. Reinhold was the senior professor of mathematics and astronomy at Wittenberg; at the time of his Polish trip, Rheticus was the junior professor there. Unlike Rheticus, Reinhold was a solid, conservatively oriented man who steadily worked his way up the academic ladder, finally becoming rector, a much admired teacher, and the most influential astronomer in the Lutheran world. As for Copernicus's treatise, he ignored the newfangled heliocentric cosmology while immersing himself in such safe technical questions as the motion of the moon (which in any system went around the earth) and the slow precessional motion of the starry firmament. That he held such an attitude is quite precisely revealed by the places where he did and where he did not annotate his *De revolutionibus.*

The significance of having available the annotated *De revolutionibus* of the foremost astronomy teacher of the mid-sixteenth century was not lost on me, for I realized that such annotations provided an ideal way to find out how teachers and students of that era approached Copernicus's astronomy. Fortunately, the mid-1500s were still close enough to the tradition of the Middle Ages, when marginal glossing of manuscripts was a common practice; also fortunately for me, the *De revolutionibus* was printed with generous margins, despite the fact that paper was the major expense for publishers. And so, with the discovery of Reinhold's *De revolutionibus,* the Great Copernicus Chase began.

In 1970 no one had much of an idea about how many copies of the *De revolutionibus* had been printed, or how many survived. An obviously incomplete list of seventy copies had been published in 1943, and that provided a starting point, especially for the German libraries. When Rheticus brought the manuscript of Copernicus's book back to Germany, the obvious printer was Johannes Petreius in Nuremberg. In the 1540s Petreius had become the leading publisher of scientific texts, and his press had both the facilities and the distribution network to cope with a major technical treatise.

It has always seemed anomalous to me that Nuremberg, where the *De revolutionibus* was originally printed, no longer has a copy from the first edition. Although still a cultural mecca, Nuremberg has long since yielded the intellectual centrum to Munich, the Bavarian capital. Munich still has two first editions in the Staatsbibliothek, but two other copies at the university perished in the air raid of July 1944—a tragedy at least partly the fault of the librarian, who, I am told, refused to protect the books on the grounds that such pessimism would be unpatriotic. In Berlin and Frankfurt copies were also lost, but elsewhere in both West and East Germany more than three dozen copies survive. Germany is the only place in Europe where first editions outnumber the second, still reflecting the original saturation from the Nuremberg printing.

The 1943 list of seventy first editions provided a particularly strong compendium for Germany, but the task of ferreting out copies elsewhere in Europe and America required other detective techniques: letters of inquiry, consultation with dealers, advertising in bibliophilic journals. In Oxford and in Cambridge there existed central lists for the libraries—something which is not the case for London, so it took several years before I realized that London outstripped either of the traditional university towns. Who would have guessed that Dr. Williams's Library, rich in theology, would also hold an *editio princeps* of the *De revolutionibus*? Or that the Victoria and Albert Museum would hold another?

Finding the copy at the V & A was something of a victory for dogged, systematic sleuthing. In an effort to ferret out as many copies as possible, I went through the Book Auction Records from their inception in 1888, and under 1897 I found the sale of a Copernicus in a Grolier binding. Jean Grolier, an illustrious French bibliophile of the sixteenth century, was noted for the distinguished book bindings in his library, which are nowadays great collector's items. My eyes jumped to attention when I saw the citation in the auction index, for I realized that I had never seen a Copernicus in a Grolier binding. An examination of the original Sotheby's auction catalogue cast more light on the sale. "The bindings," read the description, "though quite modern, are historically correct—they are, in fact, modern imitations of

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very high quality." What Sotheby's delicately called imitations, most modern collectors have unhesitatingly called forgeries. The sale included fakes of a wide variety of distinguished libraries, all cleverly made by the French forger Hagué. Eventually my investigation traced the faked Grolier copy to the Victoria and Albert, which had purchased it for their decorative arts collection. And there I found it, complete with genuine but entirely irrelevant old bookplates that Hagué had captured from who knows where.

Because the intellectual capital of France is so obviously Paris, it has come as something of a surprise for French savants to realize that there are even more copies of the *De revolutionibus* in the provinces than in Paris itself, despite the fact that there are more Copernicuses in Paris than in any other city—twelve first editions and as many seconds by my latest count. The key to the French provinces was nevertheless held by the Bibliothèque Nationale, which contains printed catalogues from most of the outlying libraries. My systematic search in the BN turned up numerous locations, and simultaneously scholars at the Centre Alexandre Koyré in Paris queried the provincial libraries. Eventually, in a series of field trips, I visited virtually every French library known to hold a copy of the first or second edition. Many of the provincial libraries have remarkable collections of early books, generally taken over from monasteries or Jesuit colleges at the time of the French Revolution. When I congratulated the librarian at Verdun on owning a Copernicus, she said, "C'est rien. You should see our manuscripts!" And she promptly led me into the manuscript room and handed me the most exquisite illuminated manuscript that I have ever examined.

But owning a Copernicus *is* something, as far as printed books are concerned, and I have little doubt that the first edition Copernicus in some of these libraries represents the most valuable book in their collection, a fact probably unknown to the majority of the librarians. I must admit that I was startled in one of the libraries in southern France. Their copy had a particularly distinguished provenance from one of the sixteenth-century Pléiade, and I wanted to photograph its title page. The match-box sized library was literally too small to provide an area sufficiently bright, and after some negotiation it was decided that I should take the book onto the front steps facing the town square and use the sunlight there.

The price of the *De revolutionibus* has climbed steeply in recent years, upward of $40,000, and will no doubt climb even higher now that the Japanese have entered the bidding. (Three of the last ten copies to enter the market have gone to universities in Japan.) The price for the first edition was considerably enhanced in 1974 following the Sotheby's auction of the first part of the scientific collection formed by Harrison Horblit. There, in a psychological configuration extremely favorable to the seller, his copy was pushed to $110,000, the highest price ever paid for a printed work in the history of science. The Horblit copy was and is the most important example in private hands. In the absence of a copy autographed by Copernicus himself, the next best "association copy" is a presentation from Rheticus, Copernicus's only direct disciple, and such is the copy that set the record-breaking price.

To me, this pricey copy has a feature that is much more interesting than Rheticus's signature. On the flyleaf is a long Greek poem written in 1543 by Joachim Camerarius, the leading professor at Leipzig, and inscribed into the book by Camerarius himself. "What is this book?" asks the stranger in the poetic dialogue. "A new one, with all kinds of good things in it," replies the philosopher. "O Zeus! How great a wonder do I see! The earth whirls everywhere in aethereal space," the stranger cries out. "But," warns the philosopher, "do not merely wonder, nor condemn a good thing as the ignorant do before they understand, but examine and ponder all these things."

Such laudatory poems were commonplace in scholarly books of the sixteenth century, and their absence in the *De revolutionibus* is conspicuous. Could Camerarius's poem have been commissioned by Rheticus for the book? Rheticus, lured by a particularly attractive salary, had left the Nuremberg printery before the front matter was finished, leaving the final part of the proofreading in the hands of Andreas Osiander, a local and learned preacher. To Rheticus's consternation, the final work contained no introductory poems, but an anonymous foreword from Osiander

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that cautioned the reader to treat the new cosmology as hypothetical, "not necessarily true nor even probable." In annoyance and anger Rheticus crossed off Osiander's foreword with a red crayon before sending the book to his friend Andreas Aurifaber, then dean at Wittenberg. Was Rheticus disturbed by the philosophy, or mostly just cross that Camerarius's poem had not been used? From this distant epoch, we can hardly even guess.

While Harrison Horblit still owned the Rheticus copy, I took Jerzy Dobrzycki, a colleague from Warsaw, down to Connecticut to see it. Professor Dobrzycki immediately realized that the Greek poem was the source of a Latin poem that Kepler had written into his own copy of the *De revolutionibus*. Kepler's copy and the poem had long been known to scholars. I have seen and photographed it in Leipzig a couple of times. Kepler signed the poem "I K," but until Dobrzycki made the connection, no one realized that the initials stood not only for Iohannes Kepler but for the Greek iota-kappa of Ioachim Camerarius—a charming example of the wordplays that so delighted Kepler. (One of his anonymous books contains three consecutive anagrams of his name on the title page!)

The Rheticus and the Kepler copies both rate three stars in my census, but such extraordinary annotations are comparatively rare. More common are minor, rather uninspired, marginal tracks: catchwords that provide a running index. Usually such notes peter out after the first few chapters. Sometimes the remarks are more substantive, and occasionally even highly critical. Christopher Clavius, the Jesuit astronomer who engineered the Gregorian calendar reform, wrote beside a faulty trigonometric theorem, "Here Copernicus is dreaming!" ("Hallucinatur hic Copernicus"). At least two annotators quoted the Sicilian astronomer Maurolycus, who had said that Copernicus "deserved whips and lashes" for his unorthodox cosmology. In the richly annotated Yale copy, a long Latin critique finally breaks off into German: "Der Himmel ist aber zum Narren worden, er musz gehn wie Copernicus will" ("The heavens would behave like a clown if they had to go as Copernicus wants"). However, the next owner added an ameliorating postscript; he noted that there was indeed a typographical error in the text, but it didn't matter because Copernicus actually used the correct number in subsequent calculations.

Despite the paucity of really well-annotated copies, there have been just enough to keep up the excitement of the chase. And gradually a major and unexpected result emerged from the survey: not only did several score books contain significant notes, but these notes ran in related families. Marginal clarifications and criticisms were passed from tutor to pupil, sometimes through several generations. For example, parts of Reinhold's comments have propagated into over a dozen specimens, and another independent set of notes appears in six more far-flung volumes. The critique in the Yale copy appears elsewhere thrice more, always untempered by the Yale postscript. These secondhand annotations reveal that even if Copernicus's revolutionary new doctrine failed to find a place in the regular university curriculum, a network of astronomy professors scrutinized the text and their protégés carefully copied out their remarks, setting the notes onto the margins of fresh copies of the book with a precision impossible by aural transmission alone. Clearly the students sat with the master book before them as they transcribed key words, data, diagrams, or whole paragraphs of elucidation. How wrong Ravetz and I were in supposing that only a handful of sixteenth-century readers were familiar with the book!

Even as the personal examinations drew to a close, well-annotated copies occasionally turned up. One of the last first editions for which information became available—from Debrecen in Hungary—turned out to have marginalia matching copies in Pisa, Soissons, and Ann Arbor. Another, from a specially unlocked safe in London, was filled with glosses, apparently quite independent of any other copy, made by a sixteenth-century Spanish bishop. However, the unannotated copies of the *De revolutionibus* are far more common, and, apart from their bindings and state of preservation, they are as alike as peas in a pod and nearly as uninteresting. Often the circumstances of seeing a book are far more memorable than the book itself.

The visit to a secluded castle—one of three English buildings still surrounded by a water-filled moat—was all the more sweetly savored with the knowledge that no historian of science had been allowed to enter its precincts

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for several decades. At that time the Tate Gallery in London had mounted a two-million-dollar campaign to save two bucolic Stubbses for England, and so it was with double interest that we sat in the castle's drawing room and counted half a dozen splendid oils by George Stubbs on the walls.

In Budapest I was actually handed a first edition to take to my room overnight; I slept with the precious volume under my bed. And at the university in Vienna I was assured that the book couldn't be fetched until the next day—a day I did not have. There ensued a delicate maneuvering for position, and it quickly became clear that they were waiting for *me* to announce *myself* as a professor. Then the magic sprang into effect. Yes, I could have the books within an hour in the professorial aula and, if I wanted, they would be available at any time till eight P.M. "We're not so efficient as American libraries," a charming young assistant confided. "Our rules go back to Franz Josef." "Never mind," I replied, knowing full well that there are few university libraries in America where one can examine a *De revolutionibus* at night.

In the professors' room that evening, all alone and unsupervised, I carefully made a rubbing of the blind-stamped binding of the Vienna Copernicus, and I mused on the fact that I hadn't been asked to produce a shred of evidence that I really was a professor. Had I shown them my Harvard dazzler letter, maybe they would have furnished tea and pastry as well!

I'm not sure if the Harvard dazzler is a uniquely Harvard phenomenon, but somehow I have trouble envisioning a Yale dazzler or a Princeton dazzler. The Harvard dazzler comes on an engraved letterhead of the president and fellows, with a gold seal bright enough to compete with the crown jewels. The corporation secretary certifies the bearer's professional credentials and expresses appreciation for any courtesies that the relevant libraries, museums, and consular officers can offer.

Only one and a half times was the dazzler letter really indispensable. I had always envisioned the École Polytechnique as the MIT of France, the home of Pasteur and Gay-Lussac. In reality it is more like the United States Military Academy, but considerably more formidable than West Point, where I had little difficulty in seeing *their* first edition Copernicus. The gate of the École Polytechnique was barred by three officers behind wickets, who assured me that I needed permission from the commandant to see a book in the library. I followed their instructions to the next gate, where the porter simply sent me directly to the library. The librarian was horrified: were I to publish anything about their Copernicus, the commandant was sure to find out and he would demand to know how I had got in without his permission. So, armed with my dazzler, I tracked back to the commandant's office, where a suitably dazzled officer promptly issued me a pass. I think the speed of this transaction left the librarian a bit chagrined. It must have been decades since anyone had asked to see the *De revolutionibus*, and there was considerable scurrying before the volume was eventually produced for my inspection.

The other time when the dazzler seemed at least half needed was at the Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana. Casual visitors to Saint Peter's or to the Sistine Chapel are protected from the fact that Vatican City is a political enclave of its own, and fully as bureaucratic as Italy itself. To visit the library, a form and a visa are demanded at the gate to the City, and then a pass from the secretariat. The check-in procedure gives one a locker key, which subsequently entitles its holder to see three books per day. Special permission from the prefect allows more books to be examined, but the book fetchers will look affronted by anyone audacious enough to suppose he can read more than three volumes in a day! Special permission will also allow foreign scholars to work in the afternoon as well. Since that is a privilege accorded only male researchers, in the afternoon a professor is allowed to read the books without wearing his jacket.

Not only has the trail led to great institutional libraries such as the Vatican (which has three first editions, as do Turin, Princeton, Glasgow, Trinity College in Cambridge, and the Bibliothèque Nationale) and to small provincial libraries, but also to a score of private collections.

Fortunately for the census taker, American collectors are not particularly secretive, an attribute probably closely tied with the comparative honesty of our income tax structure.

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Nevertheless, tracking down these copies has required a lot of generous help from rare-book dealers, and has had its moments of tragicomedy. I was, for example, barred from a West Coast collection on the grounds that I came from Massachusetts, the only state that had had the audacity not to cast its electoral votes for Mr. Nixon. On another occasion, I was literally smuggled into the library of a collector who had grown senile, an act surreptitiously carried out while the nurse was taking the owner on his daily outing. But otherwise the collectors have all accepted my visits with good humor and splendid hospitality.

The list of memorable visits to private collections included one in Pittsburgh, where we met the man who brought neon advertising signs to the world. Henry Posner told us how, in his younger years, he had met the inventor of a new kind of light, the neon bulb, and he had asked the inventor what he intended to use it for. Well, said the inventor, it would be very good on an automobile to detect if the spark was active. "It gives a very bright light, doesn't it?" Posner observed, and shortly thereafter he installed the first outdoor neon sign for a large Parisian department store. Posner invested his ensuing fortune in rare books of all sorts, from Copernicus to Omar Khayyám, from one of two known copies of the first printing of the Bill of Rights to—so he assured us—a Gutenberg Bible kept in a safe in the cellar. By that time Posner was advanced in age and occasionally not too exact in his claims, so I mentally dismissed his Gutenberg Bible as a mild delusion of grandeur. A couple of years later I was chagrined to discover that he really did have most of Gutenberg's Old Testament, now the only major part of the first printed edition still in private hands.

It is comparatively easy to know where the Gutenberg Bibles are, because this is one of the few books for which a comprehensive census exists. Surprisingly, only three other major books have their locations listed with any serious claims to completeness: the first folio of Shakespeare (over one-third of the copies are in the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington), the elephant folios of Audubon's birds, and now the first two sixteenth-century editions of Copernicus's *De revolutionibus*. As a subsidiary result of the Copernicus census, bibliographers will have extensive information on the provenances and movements of an important early scientific book.

For example, there are forty-seven first editions of the *De revolutionibus* in America. The second edition, which was issued in Basel in 1566, presumably after the 1543 edition went out of print, is virtually as rare as the first, and forty-four copies are currently recorded in this country. The first *De revolutionibus* to come to the Americas, as far as anyone knows, arrived on a ship that docked in Veracruz in 1600. That such details were recorded in the bill of lading, and that the bill of lading survives, completely astonishes me. It is only sad that the book itself can no longer be found. Apparently the earliest surviving copy was the third edition, brought over at the request of James Logan in Philadelphia around 1700, and his second edition may have come as early as 1709. The earliest first edition is undoubtedly the one in the Boston Athenaeum, which arrived around 1825. Thomas Jefferson bought a second edition for the University of Virginia, and Harvard had one at an unknown time in the nineteenth century. The larger movement of these books to America did not take place until the twentieth century—a migration of such proportion that there are more first editions here than in any other country. There are also probably more copies in private hands in America than anywhere else, but the number is rapidly declining as the books are handed over to institutional libraries. Whether the tide has turned on the flow of Copernicus books to America is hard to say, but a first edition auctioned by Philadelphia's Franklin Institute (to help pay off its Bicentennial debt) recrossed the Atlantic to the Old World once again, perhaps a harbinger of the Gutenberg Bibles that have since returned to Mainz and to Stuttgart. More recently two more copies of the *De revolutionibus*, from the Robert Honeyman collection, have followed suit—with the result that the United Kingdom has now almost nudged out the United States as the leading repository of the first edition, as it has been of the second.

Keeping track of the movements of the *De revolutionibus* has proved quite an obstacle to the formation of a complete census, although most dealers and private owners, recognizing

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the uniqueness of the Copernican survey, have been exceptionally cooperative. After the distinguished Rheticus presentation copy was bought in 1974 by a combine of dealers in New York and London, such was the secrecy of its disposition that when the book eventually found a buyer (at a suitably augmented price), even the London owners did not know its destination. Nonetheless such things are hard to keep secret, and eventually the book world buzzed with rumors that the new owner lived in Cambridge, Massachusetts. I dropped the putative collector a note about my interests, but had no response for several months. Then one day the phone rang, and to my surprise the new owner was on the line telling me about his remarkable collection of great works in the history of ideas.

Meanwhile I often wondered about the earlier provenance of this distinguished copy. What had happened to it after its recipient, Andreas Aurifaber, had died in Danzig? There seemed to be no evidence of ownership between the sixteenth century and the early 1950s, when the volume had turned up on the London book market without an intervening pedigree. And all this leads, strangely enough, to the libraries of Italy.

At the end of the sixteenth century, the ownership pattern of the *De revolutionibus* was quite different in Italy from that in Germany. There was no teaching tradition for the book in Italy, and few copies from the Nuremberg edition came down from Lutheran territory to the cisalpine regions. The 1566 Basel edition was apparently much easier for Italians to obtain and hence became widespread in the libraries of the Italian universities and religious orders. The evidence for this distribution has been preserved in an unexpected way: through the censorship of the book.

Early in the seventeenth century a brilliant but controversial physicist named Galileo Galilei began to argue that ultimate truth might be found not only in the Book of Scripture but in the Book of Nature—in other words, that cosmological theories might represent physical truth rather than mere hypotheses.

As a direct result of Galileo's polemics, Copernicus's *De revolutionibus* was in 1616 placed on the *Index of Prohibited Books* "until suitably corrected." Such was the sensitivity of the affair that for this book, and for this book only, the changes were exactly specified. The corrections, duly announced in 1620, have much in common with the recent rewriting of California high school biology textbooks. The Inquisition ordered a dozen statements that sounded too positive to be replaced by weaker sentences confirming that the cosmology was meant only as a hypothesis, not as a fact or a physical law. Of the thirty copies of the second edition now in Italian libraries, nearly 60 percent have been censored. The number includes Galileo's own copy, which has the offending text only lightly canceled but with the corrections written in his own hand. Perhaps he corrected the book while under house arrest to demonstrate his good behavior. On the other hand, of the first editions only 14 percent have been censored. The conclusion follows naturally that the majority of the first editions now in Italy came after 1700, when heliocentrism was no longer a burning issue. Circumstantial evidence suggests that the Rheticus-Aurifaber copy participated in this southern migration.

According to its catalogue, the Biblioteca Palatina in Parma should have a first edition, but when I visited that library a few years ago an assistant showed me an empty space on the shelf and through the fuzzy filter of the language barrier I understood that the copy couldn't be found. The empty slot suggested that the loss was recent, although in retrospect I realize that the shelves in question were laden with marvelously bound old books that would seldom, if ever, get moved. The catalogue seemed to say something about a manuscript note on the preface attributing it to Camerarius, and I mentally filed this away in case I should ever find such a copy in another collection.

Recently I asked the librarian at Parma to send me a copy of the catalogue description of the still-missing Copernicus, and then I promptly realized that the Latin did not say the *preface* was attributed to Camerarius but that a manuscript poem about the book by Camerarius was *prefixed* to the book. Precisely the description of the Rheticus copy! How the copy given by Rheticus to Aurifaber got to the Parma Palace Library was a mystery, but at least it would have been in keeping with the movement of first editions into

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Italy after the seventeenth century.

I was rather curious about all this, so I arranged to have a closer look at the copy. One Saturday morning the present owner brought it around to my observatory office, and there, armed with an ultraviolet lamp, we thoroughly scrutinized the volume, searching for evidence of erased inscriptions or library stamps. The ultraviolet light revealed an early and now faded signature, illegible even under the probing of the short wavelengths. However, absolutely no physical evidence emerged for an earlier ownership by the Italian library—no missing end leaves, no telltale remnants of bookplate paste, no trace of the Parma shelf mark. Nevertheless the circumstantial evidence provided by the old catalogue description suggests that Parma had been its resting place for at least a century.

Whatever its previous homes, the present location of the Rheticus-Aurifaber copy is but another manifestation of the continual movement of rare books—a movement that puts books of English provenance into Poland, books of Polish provenance into Scotland, and books of Scottish provenance into England. This movement, although guaranteeing a built-in obsolescence for any census, at least has often the merit of making the books visible.

More troubling to any census maker is the thought of any number of copies sequestered in remote monasteries, in quiescent private collections, or even in major institutions. Recently I learned of a previously missed second edition at the University of Liverpool. When the curator of rare books there sent me its description, he remarked, "I assume you are only interested in this edition, as we also have two of the first." With that offhand comment, my census of the 1543 edition went from 243 to 245.

I am often asked how many copies were printed in the first place. Disappointingly little information survives concerning press runs in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. However, an interesting way to reconstruct empirically the original number of *De revolutionibus* copies goes as follows: Make a list of possible sixteenth-century owners, and then check how many of their copies have actually been found. Since about half of the expected ownerships have turned up, this method suggests that at least half of the entire first edition is now accounted for. Hence, a printing of four hundred to five hundred copies seems likely.

Because Copernicus's book was quickly recognized as a classic, few copies would have been thrown away, and since it was formidably technical, not many copies would have worn out from overuse. But how do books disappear? In principle by fire and flood, but apart from those lost in modern warfare, cases are hard to document. Pirates threw at least one Copernicus into the Mediterranean because they were so outraged that the cargo they had just captured consisted of nothing but books. And it is quite possible that a few copies went up in smoke in the Great Fire of London, although specific evidence is still lacking.

For better or for worse, I am reconciled to producing an incomplete census, and I know that clever book dealers will keep turning up unrecorded copies. But there remains a bittersweet comfort: the Great Copernicus Chase will go on!

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The Gregarious Hermit

GERALD GROVES

While we were monks at Gethsemani Abbey, Thomas Merton and I heard, ad nauseam, our abbot's favorite adage in reference to the proper disposition of a Trappist: "To die unknown, unheralded, and unsung." But Merton died, in 1968, as probably the most popular, praised, and publicized religious writer of this century. And since his death his biographers have swelled the store of Mertonology with their encomiums. Some were written by people who knew him on a day-to-day basis only, before he became a monk—people such as Edward Rice (*The Man in the Sycamore Tree*). Others came from the research and imaginations of authors who had read the works of and about Merton and probably visited him a few times at his abbey—for example, Cornelia Silver Sussman (*Thomas Merton*). And even those who had lived with him at Gethsemani have written paeans to their confrere in *Thomas Merton, Monk*, either out of imperfect knowledge of their subject or to edify their readers, or to comply with the wishes of superiors fearful of controversy, or to meet the demands of publishers wanting a heroic image, or to pay respect to the dead (*de mortuis nil nisi bonum*).

Since I believe that no one has yet offered the public an accurate portrait of Merton the monk, I feel urged to make an attempt. I am not trammeled by external pressures and I certainly knew him well. From 1948 to 1962 we saw each other almost every day in the cloisters of Gethsemani Abbey. He had been my professor of scripture and mystical theology, and master of students. These relationships afforded me many opportunities to discuss our mutual interests and attitudes. We loved literature, aspired to fame as writers, and loathed machines (except typewriters). Temperamentally we were romantics—which, I suppose, accounts for our attraction to mysticism, reclusion, and silence. Moreover, neither of us liked self-effacement, Abbot Fox, or Trappist life. Therefore I can say with confidence, from both my experience of and sympathy with Merton, that as a companion he was the most charming of men, but as a monk hardly the ideal.

But Merton never really envisioned himself as the ideal monk. He entered the Trappist Abbey of Gethsemani because it guaranteed its members silence. However, silence was not enough for Merton; he wanted solitude as well. Consequently, although he attempted to get into the spirit of Gethsemani's intense community life at first, he never lost the image of himself as secluded upon some rugged crag or pathless peak, "absorbed" in contemplation. In fact, he spent most of his monastic career trying to become a hermit, and at last, after twenty-four years at the abbey, he got his wish. However, both in the cloister and in the hermitage Merton followed his impulses to engage in activities. He wrote books, taught courses, and chatted with friends. Moreover, he spent the last six months of his life touring the Orient.

Merton declared many times that he came to Gethsemani Abbey to be silent. Yet on the very day he entered the novitiate, he succumbed to his impulse to write. He dumped a pile of manuscripts onto the desk of Father Robert, the master of novices, saying something like "When you have time, look these over, will you, Father?" The old priest must have been shocked, since in those days young men did not enter the Trappist order to pursue literary careers. Nevertheless Merton,

GERALD GROVES teaches English literature and Latin at the University of South Carolina–Coastal.

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while still a novice, began translating books from French into English and even writing his own. Most of his early works, however, were impersonal and related to Trappist-Cistercian life: *Exile Ends in Glory* and *What Are These Wounds?* (hagiography), *Cistercian Contemplatives* and *The Waters of Siloe* (history of the order). But in 1944, three years after becoming a Trappist, he completed an enormous manuscript, entitled *The Seven Storey Mountain.* It included most of the material later published in *The Secular Journal of Thomas Merton,* a rather stout volume in itself. The Trappist censors had objected to the author's frank "confessions," demanded that much of the material be deleted, and even advised Merton to stop writing until he had mastered grammar. But he swallowed the abuse and, in 1947, got up an acceptable redaction. After sending the manuscript to Robert Giroux at Harcourt Brace, he waited in death-row anxiety for the publisher to deliberate. It was accepted.

After a slow start, sales of the book picked up. Catholics and non-Catholics viewed *The Seven Storey Mountain* as a statement about their disenchantment with post–World War II civilization. They were still horrified by the Nazi atrocities, disillusioned in their hopes for permanent peace, and afraid of annihilation by the H-bomb. They were looking for a metaphysical solution to their imbroglio, and Merton seemed to have one. Moreover, they were fascinated with the author; he depicted himself as a fun-loving, hard-drinking, world-traveled, keen-witted young man who sympathized with the underprivileged, hated violence, and aspired to heroic sanctity behind the grim walls of a Trappist abbey. Later they met him again in *The Sign of Jonas, The Secular Journal of Thomas Merton,* and *The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton.* In fact, in almost every book, essay, and poem he wrote after 1948, they found Merton the silent monk. A few scholars remarked that his criticism of the Church, society, literature, and so on, was as personal and subjective as Anatole France's and that his professed love of silence was contradicted by his prodigious output of writing. Nevertheless, the general public continued to regard Merton as the epitome of Trappist monasticism.

The Trappist order made no provisions for the physical solitude of its monks, but Merton had more opportunities for being alone than anyone else in the abbey. He had a private office and permission to take excursions outside the enclosure walls. Even after attending the various monastic exercises, he could have averaged about four hours a day free of the community. But Merton could not bear solitude very long without dipping into a tome of Migne's *Patrologia* or writing a poem. Moreover, after his ordination to the priesthood in 1951, he experienced a stint of spiritual dryness—acedia, the Desert Fathers called it. Perhaps he had been writing too much. But instead of limiting his activities, he intensified them. Unable to feel any pleasure in prayer, he inveigled his way into a number of offices: cantor, professor of scripture and mystical theology, and master of scholastics. In 1955, he persuaded Abbot Fox to give him the most gregarious post in the abbey: master of novices. As such, he spent most of his time giving spiritual direction, preparing lectures, and writing books. Of course, he had plenty of help; he recruited the most talented novices as researchers, proofreaders, and typists. Nevertheless, with such a job he often felt the need to get himself together by spending a few hours in the woods. At this period in his life a bit of solitude for him was a means to sanity, not to an apotheosis. Yet he continued to turn out works, such as *Thoughts on Solitude, The Silent Life, Seeds of Contemplation, The Wisdom of the Desert,* which reflected his actual way of life as much as the A does the I on the Square of Opposition.

Having failed to realize the ideal of a monk he had fashioned for himself and projected in his writings, Merton tended to blame his superiors and the abbey itself. He complained that his superiors compelled him to forgo his silence by urging him to write. Abbot Dunne, who had received him into the order, did encourage Merton to continue the craft he had learned and practiced before coming to the abbey—but only after Merton himself proposed it. When Abbot Fox became the head of Gethsemani in 1948, he seemed unenthusiastic about Merton's literary career, though he later changed his mind. Nevertheless, Merton knew that his superior had no right to force him to do anything contrary to the primary goal of their institute, which was to foster contemplation. He also realized that writing is not, in itself, incompatible with

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contemplation if done moderately. Hundreds of the religious, even Trappists, have written books without experiencing a conflict between vocation and avocation. But by the time *The Seven Storey Mountain* appeared, the rookie monk had eleven other books in various stages of completion.

As for the abbey, I am sure Merton discovered his error in joining a religious community that stressed the liturgy rather than solitude as the chief means to contemplation. Despite his praise of the divine office in *Bread in the Wilderness*, Merton usually found religious services, except for his private mass, unconducive to "true" prayer. Moreover, during the fifties, postulants began coming to Gethsemani in droves. Nearly three hundred men bustled through its cloisters—former technicians, businessmen, engineers, physicians who wanted nothing for their services but sanctifying grace. The abbot, a practical Yankee with a business degree from Harvard, capitalized on the situation. He set his monks to growing more crops; producing and refining such items as ham, bacon, cheese, bread, and honey; building factories and offices. With the building came the roaring of bulldozers, the pounding of jackhammers, the grinding of concrete mixers, which gave the abbey the atmosphere of a shipyard. Merton complained incessantly about the lack of peace and quiet. He should have partly blamed himself: his many books helped to attract all those people to Gethsemani and the books' sales helped finance the abbot's many noisy projects. But what disturbed Merton's peace even more was the abbot's mandate that he set a good example for the novices by attending all the community exercises (many of which he habitually skipped in favor of jaunts through the woods) and even the numerous lessons in Gregorian chant given by the professors of music whom the then affluent abbot had imported from France. Desperate, Merton begged the abbot to let him spend most of his day in the little cabin atop a fire tower which the State Forestry Department of Kentucky had erected on the abbey grounds. Abbot Fox agreed, provided that Merton remain in it day and night—that is, permanently. He knew that Merton, despite his desire to get away from community exercises and the noise of machinery, would never take up a Simon Stylites form of anchorism in a bare cabin swinging in the air one hundred feet above the ground.

Merton seriously considered leaving Gethsemani. It would have been easy; any number of bishops would have received him into their dioceses. But through his writings, the public had identified him with the abbey, had learned to esteem the Trappist vocation, and had come to look upon Merton as the ideal monk. To have returned to the world would have disillusioned his readers and disgraced himself. But he had a way out of the cenobitic life that was, as it were, built into monastic tradition. Canon law stipulates that a monk, with permission, may pass from his order or congregation to another, so long as the transfer involves embracing a form of religious life that offers the best means to contemplation: solitude. In the Roman Catholic Church only two religious institutions provide this means: the Carthusians and the Camaldolese. (Actually, Merton had wanted to join the Carthusians rather than the Trappists in 1941, but at that time they had houses only in Europe, and overseas traveling was impossible because of the war.) Merton applied for acceptance into La Grande Chartreuse and, contrary to the testimonies of many of his biographers, received permission—provided he would keep the fasts, attend the vigils, and possibly limit or eliminate his writing. The motto of the Carthusians is *Numquam reformata quoniam numquam deformata* ("Never reformed because never deformed"); they give no special treatment to any candidates—not even celebrities. But Merton needed lots of good food to cure his colitis and sufficient opportunity to satisfy his impulse to write. So he gave up the idea. Later, in 1956, after Dom Agosto Modotti founded a Camaldolese laura (group of hermits) in Big Sur, California, Merton tried to join. Modotti was hurting for postulants and would have accepted Merton without conditions. But Abbot Fox knew that the Camaldolese prior was not favored by the Sacred Congregation of Religious in Rome. He wrote a letter asking the prefect, Cardinal Valeri, to refuse Merton permission to make the transfer. The prefect's response to Merton's appeal contained the following quotation from *No Man Is an Island*: "Our Father in Heaven has called us each one to the place in which he can best satisfy his infinite desire to do us good." Merton laughed

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at the situation; he was regarded as such an authority on the spiritual life that the prefect used his own bromide against him.

One evening, as Merton and I were returning from Louisville (we had visited our doctor for physical checkups), we decided that we should become independent hermits—that is, solitaries affiliated with no religious organization but a diocese. Ours was a bold plan, since it involved leaving the Trappist order eventually. (I also had tried to join the Carthusians and Camaldolese and been blocked by Abbot Fox.) During the next few years I wrote to some twenty American bishops for acceptance as a hermit into their dioceses but without success; they wanted potential parish priests or nothing. As for Merton, he seemed to have lost interest in the project. He was still novice master but had been given more leisure; in fact, he spent an entire day each week in a chalet which the abbot had built for him deep in the woods. Moreover, inconsistent as ever, he was keen on joining some Benedictine monks in Central America who wanted him as their superior. I had just about despaired of ever going on my own when a friend of Merton, a Benedictine monk from Belgium, visited Gethsemani to give conferences on the spiritual life. Merton and I could not write anyone without having our letters read by Abbot Fox, but the visiting monk, Jean Leclerq, could. Merton got him to contact his ex-abbot, Dom Jacques Winandy, who had retired and was living as a hermit on the island of Martinique. Leclerq informed him that two Trappists of Gethsemani would like to join him and needed the consent of his bishop. I was one, but the other Trappist was not Merton; he was Father Sylvanus, the librarian, who also had an attraction to solitude. With the Bishop of Martinique's invitation, Abbot Fox had no recourse but to let us go. Sylvanus left Gethsemani about a year later, and I followed him within a few months. We were the first Trappists of Gethsemani, and perhaps of the Trappist order in modern times, to make the transition from monk to hermit. The morning I left for Martinique I slipped a note under Merton's napkin in the refectory, promising to help should he want to join us. He mentioned the incident in *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* and declared that he would not be able to correspond with me. But he did. In 1963, after my article "Fourteen Years with Thomas Merton" was published, he sent me a Baxter Lane "funny" card depicting a fellow sitting on a pile of calendar pages with an hourglass upon his head. It referred, of course, to the fourteen years. On the front of the card Merton wrote,

> Great article! Have heard favorable comments! Police are in total confusion! Am on my way to the hills. Wish I were there. Gethsemani is in a deep fog.
>
> Blessings and good wishes to all,
>
> UNCLE LOUIE

Although "Uncle Louie" (Father Louis was Merton's name in the order) never came to Martinique, he did become a hermit. In 1964, the Trappist abbots of North and South America met at Gethsemani Abbey, where they agreed upon introducing the eremitical life into the framework of their order. The following year Merton established himself permanently in his chalet. For several months he had neither a chapel, nor a kitchen, nor any source of heating but a fireplace. So he walked to the abbey every day to say mass, eat dinner, and collect supplies. Later, however, his large cinder-block abode was finished. No longer would he be "proclaimed" in the chapter of faults for not showing up at community exercises. His days of fleeing the noise of machinery were over. No more would monks serving in the refectory for the infirm mockingly beg him for a taste of his beefsteak or apple pie. And when the bells rang for going to bed or getting up, he could ignore them. Thereafter he returned to the abbey only on Sundays to give lectures—on solitude.

As a hermit, Merton must have lived a very simple life: gathering firewood, fetching water from the lake, cooking his own meals, saying mass in his private chapel, and reciting the divine office. But he was not isolated; eventually Abbot Fox, who had retired from his post, and a few more monks set themselves up as hermits in the neighborhood. Then, too, several hillbilly families lived, and had lived for decades, in the hills and the valleys nearby. Also, Merton received special visitors from time to time, just as he had done at the abbey. And he continued to pick up his

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mail—letters, books, magazines—from the Trappist post office.

How much time Merton spent alone in his hermitage absorbed in the contemplation of God, I am not sure. But he certainly did a considerable amount of writing, and many of the works he published after 1965 reflect his interest not only in contemplation, but in politics, sociology, and Oriental cults. He did permit an old college chum to photograph him, not kneeling at prayer with a black hood covering his face but wearing blue jeans and a toboggan cap while sweeping the front porch of his hermitage. The photos (in Rice's *The Man in the Sycamore Tree*) evoke the image of Henry David Thoreau at Walden Pond rather than of Saint Anthony in the desert of Scete. And like Thoreau, Merton remained in his solitude only a little more than two years. What is ironical, but quite typical of Merton, is that during those two years of seemingly solitary bliss he was planning a long tour of the Orient, which he began in the autumn of 1968. Apparently he was no more an ideal hermit than he had been an ideal monk. But he did not seem to care any more.

All I have said about Merton's life after 1963 is speculation based on his writings and my own experience of the eremitical life in Martinique, the Bahamas, and finally Mexico. My migrations were largely due to the urging of local bishops to take over remote parishes in their dioceses. It was in Mexico that I learned of Merton's death in Bangkok in 1968. After stepping out of a shower, probably wet, he had touched the uninsulated part of a cord on an electric fan. I would not be surprised to learn that his dying words were "Damn those machines!" Perhaps the fan's 220 volts that shot through his body preserved the image Merton had created of himself in the minds of his uncritical readers. Many scholars, however, say that he would not have returned to Gethsemani after being wined, dined, and almost enshrined by both Buddhist and Christian monks all over Asia.

Solitude must have taught Merton, as it did me, that the very aspiration toward ideals is romantic and finally frustrating. After leaving Gethsemani, I was free to contemplate myself contemplating until I became quite bored with it. But I was also free to leave my solitude and do something worthwhile. I earned a doctorate in comparative literature and became a teacher. Merton went on his tour because he must have been weary of solitude; no one forced him to go. And as he roamed through the East, the sense of liberation must have nearly overwhelmed him. Nearly, I say, for Merton would not have broken all ties with Gethsemani. He needed to feel attached to a familiar haven. I believe that, had he lived, he would have continued his journey around the world, sending now and then a "miss you" letter to his fellow monks back home. And in his writing he would have projected a new image—the image of the itinerant hermit or, as we used to call Père Antoine, the roving solitary of Martinique, *l'ermite en chemin.*

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Lewis and Clark Probe the Heart of Darkness

WILLIAM NICHOLS

When Lewis and Clark returned safely to St. Louis in 1806, completing their expedition, they were long overdue, and had been given up for lost by nearly everybody, including their moving spirit, President Thomas Jefferson. They had survived a hard winter in what is now North Dakota, a very difficult passage through the Rocky Mountains, an incredibly wet winter on the Pacific Coast, and the arduous return—all with the loss of just one man. But the Corps of Discovery, as the expedition was called, did much more than survive. Lewis and Clark wrote voluminously, amassing huge amounts of information about the unknown land. They made brilliant contributions to our knowledge of geography; they carefully described many new species of plants and animals; and they provided the richest knowledge we have of several native American societies which they encountered along the way. This last contribution is particularly valuable because a few of the Indian societies became extinct or nearly so a few decades after the Expedition. Some of the highest tributes paid Lewis and Clark as explorers had to do with their skills as observers and diplomats in their meetings with North American Indians.

All this has been justly celebrated in many books and articles, but within the grand success of the Lewis and Clark Expedition there is a darker, more elusive story of failure. Something happened during the Corps of Discovery's winter on the Pacific that changed their approach to the Indians. Although they continued to observe the nonhuman world with disciplined curiosity and to meet difficulties with consummate resourcefulness, they seemed to be resentful and impatient with the tribal societies along the path of their return to civilization, even regarding them in rigid stereotypes. This change is difficult to understand, but I think it has much to do with the Expedition's inability to sustain an attitude toward the Indians that was informed by the spirit of Enlightenment science.

WILLIAM NICHOLS teaches English at Denison University. This essay grows out of his research for a novel about York, who was William Clark's slave.

I

Thomas Jefferson was determined that the Expedition should make important contributions to scientific knowledge. Had he known a scientist prepared to withstand the rigors of the wilderness, the President would probably have convinced him to accompany the Expedition. As it was, Jefferson arranged to have Meriwether Lewis study with the most distinguished members of the American Philosophical Society: Andrew Ellicott, Robert Patterson, Dr. Benjamin Rush, Dr. Benjamin Smith Barton, and Dr. Caspar Wistar. In addition, Lewis had spent two years as Jefferson's private secretary, with access to the President's library and his wide-ranging scientific knowledge and interests. By the time Lewis left the East Coast to begin the actual training of the Expedition's members, which took place near St. Louis, he had been steeped in several versions of the painstaking, systematic observation that characterized much of the science of his day. If that were not enough, he received from Jefferson a long letter reminding him that the ultimate worth of the Expedition would rest on disciplined observation com-

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bined with the most meticulous record keeping; and Jefferson left no doubt that this applied especially to the study of the Indian tribes the Corps of Discovery was certain to meet on its way to the Pacific.

One measure of Lewis's successful baptism in the "scientific spirit" is the tragicomic story of the *Experiment*, his beloved collapsible boat. Lewis himself designed the *Experiment*, carefully supervised the construction of its metal frame at the Harpers Ferry forge, and christened it. His plan was to reinforce the metal frame with wooden supports, cover it with birch bark, and use it to carry supplies when the Expedition reached shallow water in the Rockies. When Lewis actually attempted to put the boat into service above the Great Falls of Montana, he was forced to change plans and cover it with elk and buffalo hides; but when it was completed it sat beautifully on the water. It was thirty-six feet long, seemed capable of holding as much as four tons of supplies, and could be carried easily by just a few men when it was empty. Unfortunately, its seams opened and it sank a few hours after launching.

The failure of the *Experiment* cost the Expedition at least two weeks, which turned out to be almost critical because they were nearly trapped in the Rockies by the onset of winter. Yet the journals of the Expedition make it clear that Lewis and others knew the *Experiment* was a bad risk rather early, when they discovered that the trees in the vicinity of the Great Falls would not yield tar. Lewis was obliged to put together a caulking material from beeswax, charcoal, and buffalo tallow, a substitute in which he had little faith. What kept him and others at work on the *Experiment*, despite the important delay and their growing awareness that it was likely to fail, seems to have been a playful curiosity which sometimes allowed them to set aside practical matters for the sheer joy of tryout and discovery.

The Expedition itself was eminently practical in a number of ways, of course. It was an effort to strengthen political sovereignty over the new land, and at the same time it was a search for new trade routes. But there was also, sometimes, a delightful suspension of practical concerns, an obliviousness to the passage of time, and a playful, if well-focused, curiosity. The journals suggest that both Lewis and Clark at times felt this mood intensely as they tried to understand and describe the new phenomena they encountered. In addition to the seemingly impractical delay caused by the *Experiment* fiasco, there was a prodigious effort to capture a prairie dog to send back to Jefferson. The Corps of Discovery formed bucket brigades stretching from the Missouri River to a prairie dog village, and spent the better part of a day pouring water down holes before they were able to capture one bedraggled prairie dog. Not only was the capture of this new "barking squirrel" hard work, but the normally cautious commanders posted only one guard by the boats, despite the fact that they had begun to worry about Indian attacks. Whether or not all the men of the Expedition shared the lively spirit which is apparent in the accounts of both Lewis and Clark, they were obliged to work in support of it. To that extent it must have suffused the whole Corps of Discovery.

II

Lewis and Clark respected the Indians' personal dignity, their rituals, their taboos, their religious thinking, indeed the full content of their thought. They understood that thought so well that they must be ranked among the masters of primitive psychology. Finally, there was the simple fact that they, and especially Clark, liked Indians.

—Bernard De Voto
The Journals of Lewis and Clark

Reading Lewis's and Clark's accounts of contact with native American societies from St. Louis to the Pacific, one is struck by their ability to transcend the images, attitudes, and behavior of "savagism," as Roy Harvey Pearce has called the form of ethnocentrism which has dominated our society's response to North American Indians. In *Savagism and Civilization*, Pearce showed the power of a few Indian stereotypes in American intellectual history from 1609 to 1851, and while Lewis and Clark certainly did not avoid them altogether, neither were the minds of the explorers controlled by them. For one thing, as Bernard De Voto suggested, they were unusually well informed about at least some native American societies. During their winter of preparation at Wood River, Lewis spent much of his time with traders

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and local Indians, collecting information about the Sioux, the Arikaras, and the Mandans. Before Lewis and Clark began to ascend the Missouri they knew that some of these tribes were skilled in agriculture, for instance—knowledge which contradicted the dominant view that all native Americans were solitary hunters. Because the explorers were determined to know the tribes along their way, in part to assure that their route could become a safe avenue for commerce, they became aware of great differences among the customs and beliefs of the various societies. Among the Arikaras they found their gifts of whiskey rejected unless accompanied by useful gifts such as axes and guns. The Arikaras were not accustomed, Chief Kakawita told Lewis and Clark, to make fools of themselves for nothing—a response that violated another important assumption of savagism: that all North American Indians were childlike and thus easily corrupted by civilized ways.

The skills which Lewis and Clark demonstrated as diplomats and observers in their contacts with native Americans are particularly remarkable because each brought the psychological background of an Indian fighter to the Expedition. Both had been part of an army that considered most Indians the enemy. Clark especially had been involved in the effort to push troublesome tribes farther west; in addition, he had grown up under the influence of his well-known older brother, George Rogers Clark, the Indian fighter.

That Lewis and Clark could get past the rigid simplicities that often make up the psychological arsenal of men at war had much to do with their disciplined, methodical efforts to study native American societies. Especially as they moved among tribes with whom white men had made no recorded contact, they were able to approach the people with something of the openness and detachment cultivated by modern anthropologists. Indeed, the detailed ethnography which Jefferson asked of his explorers reminds one that the disciplined search for knowledge can be as important as knowledge itself in overcoming the inhumanities that stem from ignorance:

> The commerce which may be carried on with the people inhabiting the line you will pursue, renders a knoledge of these people important. you will therefore endeavor to make yourself acquainted, as far as diligent pursuit of your journey shall admit,
>
> with the names of the nations & their numbers;
> the extent & limits of their possessions;
> their relations with other tribes or nations;
> their language, traditions, monuments;
> their ordinary occupations in agriculture, fishing, hunting, war, arts & the implements for these;
> their food, clothing, & domestic accomodations;
> the diseases prevalent among them, & the remedies they use;
> moral & physical circumstances which distinguish them from the tribes we know;
> peculiarities in their laws, customs & dispositions;
> and articles of commerce they may need or furnish, & to what extent.

In addition, Jefferson urged them to learn what they could of "the state of morality, religion & information among them" so that those who set out to "civilize & instruct them" would be able to adapt their methods to the customs of the societies they proposed to change.

Needless to say, Lewis and Clark were not able to accommodate President Jefferson's thirst for knowledge on every point, but they tried very hard to do so. It was the quest for understanding which primarily controlled their relations with the Indians on the way west, and the significance of this discipline is nowhere more apparent than in the Expedition's contact with the Shoshoni.

By the time they met the Shoshoni in the Rocky Mountains, the explorers were desperate. The Expedition had followed a route into the mountains which added hundreds of unnecessary miles, and they were in danger of being trapped by the approaching winter snows. They had once expected to be able to use their canoes almost to the Great Divide, make a short portage, and then find navigable streams to the west; but it was apparent that they would need horses to get over the Bitterroot Mountains to the west. More important, perhaps, given their race against winter, they needed a guide to lead them to the most direct route over the Bitterroots. The Shoshoni were willing to supply one, despite their initial fear that the Expedition was in league with the Hidatsas, their enemies to the east. Their cooperation seemed assured when

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Lewis and Clark discovered that Cameahwait, an important Shoshoni chief, was the brother of Sacajawea, who had been a captive of the Hidatsas several years earlier. But within a few days of their meeting, Lewis learned that Cameahwait intended to break his promises and had ordered his people to move immediately to the land along the Missouri River where they customarily went to hunt buffalo.

Lewis might well have viewed this change of plans, which threatened the survival of the Expedition, as nothing more than treachery had he not found a way of understanding it. During much of the two weeks he spent with the Shoshoni, he was engaged in a careful study of their culture; and no doubt because of Sacajawea's help as a translator, he developed here the richest single ethnography of the whole exploration. By the time he heard of the broken promise, Lewis understood that Cameahwait's people were nearly out of food, that they were supposed to meet several other bands of Shoshoni and Flatheads in order to proceed in force to disputed buffalo grounds along the Missouri, and that this pattern of pushing out and then withdrawing to the mountains had been forced upon them by the Hidatsas, whose power came from rifles furnished by white men to the east. Lewis understood, in short, that he was dealing with fear and hunger rather than the mysterious "treachery of the aborigenes," a phrase that would become important to him later. His response to the broken promise might well have been a desperate show of force, but instead it was measured, tactful, compassionate, and altogether successful. It contrasts dramatically with responses Lewis and others would make to similar crises on their return.

III

Explorers see more deeply, darkly, privately and disinterestedly than imperialists, who must perforce be circumspect and prudential.

—Richard Chase
The American Novel and Its Traditions

The journal accounts of the Expedition's progress to the Pacific offer extraordinary glimpses of humane, perceptive encounters with a variety of tribal societies, and there were undoubtedly many reasons for these triumphs of intercultural understanding. The presence of Sacajawea and her child was unquestionably reassuring to the Indians. In addition, Lewis and Clark were fortunate to have the services of George Drouillard, whose mastery of sign language enabled them to communicate rather well with most of the people they met. (Given what is to follow, it is worth mentioning that the Indians of the lower Columbia River, with whom the Corps of Discovery wintered in 1805–1806, used a jargon for trade purposes that included English, French, and several native American languages; consequently, the explorers seem to have relied less on sign language with these groups than with others they met.) But clearly the crucial element in the Expedition's contacts with Indians was a mood which changed dramatically during their wet winter on the Pacific. They went out as explorers, in Richard Chase's term; they came back as imperialists, or worse. On their return, their attitude of patient discipline and curiosity, which had previously served them so well in their relations with Indians, was almost gone. They acted like a conquering army, taking food from lodges by force and using tricks to frighten the people into giving them food. On July 27, 1806, just two months before the Expedition's arrival in St. Louis, one member of the Expedition, Reuben Fields, killed a warrior of the Blackfeet with a knife and Lewis shot another in the stomach. George Drouillard asked to kill a third, but Lewis denied him permission because the warrior was clearly not threatening them. Perhaps the violence in this situation was not altogether avoidable. The Blackfeet tried to steal rifles and horses from Lewis and a small party of men when they were far from the rest of the Corps, and had the Blackfeet succeeded, Lewis's party might not have survived. But it is clear from Lewis's account that the Indians were determined to steal, not to kill; and it is significant that Drouillard had a similar experience among the Shoshoni on the way west, when he apparently did not even consider hurting the young Shoshoni tribesman who tried to steal his rifle.

Students of the Lewis and Clark Expedition have seemed not to notice the change of mood. But whatever the process was that took place in the minds of the explorers, it probably began shortly after their arrival at

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the mouth of the Columbia River. They had just been through the most difficult part of their journey—the hunger and cold of their passage through the Bitterroot Mountains, followed by a headlong rush down the Columbia River to the coast. There they met terribly wet and stormy weather, along with Indians who were willing to trade food only at prices the Corps could not afford. Lewis and Clark paid those prices when their men were in danger of starving, but resentfully. Then, as if the weather and the expenses were not enough to ruin their long-awaited arrival at the Pacific, there were instances of Indian thievery that made them very angry. Eleven Cathlamets arrived one wet morning, for example, more than two weeks after the Expedition had reached the end of its journey. They had come to trade food and elk skins when the men were hungry, their leather clothes rotting into tatters from the constant damp. Not only were the prices too high in this instance, but one of the Expedition's axes disappeared. It was found under a Cathlamet's robes, and Clark, laconic as usual, said, "I shamed this fellow verry much and told them they should not proceed with us." His anger and disappointment must have been the more disturbing by contrast with the Expedition's recent encounter with the Nez Percé, who had generously helped the explorers and agreed to care for their horses until they needed them for their return across the mountains.

By the time the Expedition had spent a dark, damp winter with the Indians of the lower Columbia, such instances of petty thievery had nearly assumed the stature of capital crimes. Less than a month after leaving the coast to begin the return trip, Lewis reacted this way to the loss of a buffalo robe:

> being now confident that the indians had taken it I sent the Indian woman [Sacajawea] on to request Captain C. [Clark] to halt the party and send back some of the men to my assistance being determined either to make the indians deliver the robe or birn their houses. they have vexed me in such a manner by such repeated acts of villany that I am quite disposed to treat them with every severyty, their defenseless state pleads foregiveness so far as rispects their lives.

The villainy Lewis refers to was essentially petty thievery, but it is clear that the Indians along the middle stretches of the Columbia, who had been eager to trade when the Expedition first met them in the fall of 1805, were much less cooperative in the spring of 1806. Two developments help to explain the shift. By this time the Expedition was very short on the trade goods which had eased their way to the Pacific, and the Indians, short on food after the winter, were not in a mood to trade.

The Expedition's new mood seems almost pathological when it is compared with the tact and intelligence displayed on their way to the Pacific; and it is difficult to account for the change. Perhaps Lewis and Clark were feeling some disappointment, even a sense of failure, because they had not found a water route across the continent. The discovery of such a route was one of the primary reasons for the Expedition, but during the winter at Fort Clatsop, as they compared notes and considered the maps Clark had made on the way out, they concluded that the existence of such a passage was an empty dream. On the other hand, Lewis and Clark no longer had to concern themselves with the likelihood that the hostile Indians they had left behind would be waiting to confront them on their return. Clark stated their original policy when he described one of many meetings with Indians as they descended the Columbia: "as we thought it necessary at this time to treat those people very friendly & ingratiate our Selves with them, to insure us a kind & friendly reception on our return, we gave Small presents to Several, and half a Deer to them to eate." Since one of the purposes of the Expedition was to establish friendly relations between the government in Washington and the native Americans, with an eye to possibilities for trade, it is improbable that Lewis and Clark would have casually abandoned this outbound policy. For men as disciplined and cautious as Lewis and Clark to have changed their tactics, something deeply traumatic must have occurred.

A hint of what I take to be the underlying reason for the change is found in a journal passage written by Lewis a little more than a month before the Expedition left the Pacific Coast to return east. It is a rather long passage which insists on the value of suspicion in dealing with "the treachery of the aborigenes of America." Here Lewis is concerned not so much with what he believed to be the ever-

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present danger of treachery but with the tendency of his countrymen "in their sincerity and friendship" to forget it. Such forgetfulness, he claimed, had cost hundreds of American lives, and he apparently saw dangerous signs of short memory among the men of the Corps. "So long have our men been accustomed to a friendly intercourse with the natives, that we find it difficult to impress on their minds the necessity of always being on their guard with rispect to them."

The problem was not that members of the Expedition had formed friendships and lasting alliances with the Clatsops and Chinooks who lived nearby. There was considerable sexual contact as well as trading, but the men seem to have found these Indians peculiarly unattractive. In fact, a good deal of evidence suggests that white men who met the Indians of the Northwest Coast in the first years of the nineteenth century were put off by their culture and their appearance. It seems likely that Americans and Europeans had come to identify the slender, silent warrior of the Plains with their vision of the Noble Savage; yet these stocky, often frightened, but amicable traders, many with flattened foreheads, appeared somehow pathetic. Such a response was summed up with startling clarity by a Methodist missionary, Gustavus Hines, who came some thirty-five years after Lewis and Clark to minister to the Indians of the Oregon country. Within days of his arrival, Hines was so repelled by what he had seen of the Indians that he was already turning to the savagist belief in their inevitable extinction. "Under the impression that the doom of extinction is suspended over [t]his race, and that the hand of Providence is removing them to give place to a people more worthy of this beautiful and fertile country, we arrived at the place of our encampment. . . ." Such a view was not limited to those who had direct contact with the Indians of the Northwest Coast; it survives, for example, in the work of Bernard De Voto, who refers to "the decadent, thievish people of the Lower Columbia" and claims that by the time Lewis and Clark met them, they "had been debauched by the maritime trade."

No doubt the maritime trade had put new pressures on the coastal tribes of the Pacific Northwest before Lewis and Clark arrived, but evidence gathered by anthropologists, especially Franz Boas and Melville Jacobs, suggests that these were complex, resilient traditional societies which might have survived the onslaught of Western civilization as well as any if they had not been terribly reduced by disease in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Still, it is not difficult to understand how white men who met them in the years when many of them were succumbing to disease might have viewed them as pathetic. Their societies were quite different than the warrior tribes farther east; and physically, in part because of their traditional flattened foreheads, there was something about them that, to Western eyes, probably seemed both monstrous and contemptible.

What disturbed the members of the Expedition most in their relations with the Clatsops and Chinooks, I think, was their own deep ambivalence. In a long passage describing the clothing, ornaments, and bodily characteristics of the tribes along the Columbia, Lewis suddenly interjected, "I think the most disgusting sight I ever beheld is these dirty naked wenches." The comment departs radically from the detached tone of the rest of the passage, and it is somewhat inconsistent with an entry Lewis made a few days earlier in which he acknowledged having been very strict with the men about approaching six Clatsop women who had given them venereal disease on an earlier visit. There is a good deal of evidence, in fact, that the Corps did not find the women of these tribes utterly disgusting. Moreover, the journals are filled with Lewis's and Clark's admiration for the Indians' skills in building canoes and handling them in the roughest of seas, and they reluctantly came to acknowledge the Chinooks' cleverness as traders. They recognized more quickly a kind of intelligence they could readily appreciate. "The Clatsops, Chinnooks, Killamucks [Tillamooks] & C.," Lewis said, "are very loquacious and inquisitive; they possess good memories and have repeated to us the names [and] capasities of the vessels & C. of many traders and others who have visited the mouth of this river. . . ." But the closer Lewis and Clark looked at these Indians and the more they were drawn into a kind of intimacy with them, the more inscrutable they became. On the one hand, the Indians seemed almost subhuman, truly beneath contempt; on the other, they were

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highly admirable, with kinds of intelligence and skills that the explorers could not begin to imitate. Although Lewis and Clark did not say so, they must have assumed that people who appeared to accept quite openly and casually the necessity for occasional thievery would be capable of unspeakable treachery if given the chance. So, unable to make sense of these societies by means of the disciplined observation that had served them well on their westward journey, Lewis and Clark were thrown back on the irrationally conceived, rigid stereotypes that have been the framework of most Indian-white contact. Thus, Lewis was moved to remind the Corps insistently of "the treachery of the aborigenes of America," and the journal accounts during the return are marked with the most devastatingly simple categories of all—good and bad Indians. The Blackfeet were bad, and when they attempted to steal from Lewis and his party, the category was devastatingly confirmed.

IV

Unfortunately, we know little about the inner lives of the members of the Lewis and Clark Expedition after their return. We know that Meriwether Lewis suffered from depression and probably committed suicide, but it is impossible to infer how closely that great inner darkness was linked to the change of attitude I have described. We do, however, have a fascinating example from the 1930s of a similar experience, which may throw into relief the experience of the Corps of Discovery because its results were so different. This is the experience of Claude Lévi-Strauss, who left a philosophy post in France to go into the jungles of Brazil and study four Indian societies. The essential similarity is in Lévi-Strauss's work with the Tupi-Kawahib, who had never before been studied and who proved to be inscrutable. Not only did Lévi-Strauss's observation of the Tupi-Kawahib fail to help him understand them, but he found it nearly impossible to communicate with them. What is clear from his *Tristes Tropiques* is that he hoped to bring back an important kind of knowledge from his work with the Indians of Brazil, and he was profoundly disappointed to find the Tupi-Kawahib inaccessible to observation and analysis. "My journey had been enthralling and, at the end of it, I had come upon 'my' savages. But alas—they were all *too* savage." This experience left him, Lévi-Strauss says, "with a feeling of emptiness." Indeed, his work in the years after returning from Brazil can be understood as a search for consolation in scientific methods. Clifford Geertz put it succinctly in *The Interpretation of Cultures*: "What a journey to the heart of darkness could not produce, an immersion in structural linguistics, communication theory, cybernetics, and mathematical logic can."

This commitment to what Geertz calls "a general, closed, abstract, formalistic science of thought, a universal grammar of the intellect" is a long way from the scientific spirit which guided the Corps of Discovery in much of its contact with North American Indians. The structuralism of Lévi-Strauss is theoretical in a way that not even the voracious mind of Thomas Jefferson would have been likely to find very significant. What Lewis and Clark took from the science of their time was, most of all, the disciplined curiosity and the impulse to classify the world accessible to the senses. They were eager to acknowledge differences, to study them with care. They seem not to have felt anything like the structuralist's desire to probe beneath appearance to a deep-rooted structure, in search of a reality that joins all people. The science which influenced Lewis and Clark had little of the specialization and professionalism that characterize modern science. And they were not much concerned about what effect their methods of gathering information might have on their informants; nor did they consider various "models" for understanding the tribal societies they encountered. They trusted their senses and their capacity to understand customs different from their own, as most modern anthropologists would not.

Yet I believe there is a continuity between the spirit Lewis and Clark showed on their way west and the style and sensibility of modern scientists in the laboratory and in the field. It was a spirit of openness to seeming aberration, attentiveness to detail, willingness to acknowledge what cannot be immediately explained—this joined with a disciplined impulse toward discovery and a faith that all puzzles will ultimately be solved. This legacy of the Enlightenment has never been limited

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to science, of course, but since the eighteenth century it has been most readily manifest in the development of science. As a part of the scientific enterprise, it is less visible in our own time because of the rise of professionalism, specialization, and increasing emphasis on methodology and theory.

There is something very appealing in the theoretical passion of the structuralist to discover what human beings have in common beneath the layers of cultural difference. Yet now, as it becomes evident that cultures we once dismissed as "primitive" have much to teach us about living less destructively in an environment whose natural balance we have already damaged, there is something equally appealing about acknowledging the differences and learning what they mean. That the Corps of Discovery could studiously affirm human difference on their way to the Pacific, despite the limited categories of "savagism" that were part of their intellectual baggage, is a triumph of mind. There is probably an illuminating paradox in their failure to sustain that triumph through the winter of 1805–1806. More than anything else, the fear that they had much in common with a people they saw as pathetic and depraved might have led Lewis and Clark back to reassuring stereotypes. The darkness they found in the West might have corresponded to something they felt within themselves. Two modern historians, Jane R. Stewart and Edgar I. Stewart, have made explicit the cultural arrogance that is perhaps inevitably linked with such a fear. In their introduction to Ross Cox's *The Columbia River*, a nineteenth-century book which describes the same people who eluded Lewis's and Clark's understanding, the Stewarts say: "His [Cox's] more or less between-the-lines account of the progressive and largely unconscious deterioration of character that resulted from close contact and association with a barbaric race only slightly above the Stone Age called attention to a little-known aspect of the price that the white man paid for the furs obtained in the wilderness." Lewis and Clark were after much more than furs, of course; they wanted to *know* the wilderness and its people. That they tried to do so with great courage and intelligence is reason enough to praise them. Still, it is important to acknowledge that they found the Indians of the lower Columbia River unfathomable, and their disappointment drew them toward dangerous irrationality. Yet even in this dark chapter of the Expedition's story, there is something admirable: Lewis and Clark seem to have found little comfort in complacent generalizations about the differences between civilized men and barbarians. They made statements as brutally simplistic as the historians', but perhaps also they had observed too carefully the complex lives of native Americans to believe they could be dismissed so easily.

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The Trail

RICHARD DANKLEFF

On and on down the dust
west from Fort Laramie,
weary, sweat-smeared, we and our beasts
persist. Passing the early starters'
discarded flour tools clothes,
bloated horse carcasses,
sparse grass, grass eaten down,
no one stops. My sister,
six months great, pretends
when our ox teams do finally
founder, she'll start to walk.
I walk (I don't say so) to cradle
my ache. Last week my three-year-old
all one hot afternoon and evening,
peevish, cried. That night
quiet, his rib bones like
a rack, he died toward morning.
More sick now, they all fear
their sieges and vomiting
may become cholera cramps,
attempts to cure that ailment
failing. Ahead, the peaks appear
farther away. Yesterday
past our noon-resting beasts, themselves
eastbound with mail, whirled four
wild Mormons horseback flying
by in dust like fog—with their
spare horses running steadily

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ahead—and would not stop,
whipped past us fast and vanished.
When angels take our sons we make
more sons. So say the comforters
to wombs like me. Make bones,
more bones, you cannot make too many.
His candy hid so well
melts. Add to my ache, reckoning
back, that small farmboy with eggs
who urged us buy. Kansas.
Camp time. Down deep-mud wagon ruts
he trudged to us. The banjo-man
began to eat them shell
and all, raw eggs, crunching
crushed shells as dogs do bones
one after one.

✪ RICHARD DANKLEFF is at work on a collection of poems set in the nineteenth-century West. *Popcorn Girl*, a collection of his twentieth-century poems, was recently published by Oregon State University Press.

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Funeral

JOANNA THOMPSON

Wind comes like the chief mourner,
masking its face with sliding
taffetas and iron needles,
its voice a curling drone.

Mercy is not in it. It slaps
over the mouths of graves
and pushes our dark, reverent
clusters away. Edges of it
pretend to drag themselves

like children into our arms,
but the clasp it seeks
is bloodless, an unlined skull
to chafe.

We are
only impediments to the business
of death, as trees to the wind.
It does not break against
the mountains, but gullies

up a snake's track on slimed
grass. Trees open their mouths,
torn lips of leaves swallowed
and spat out like our oyster
screams in blue metal depths.

We crack. We roll away
in waxed limousines, leaving
it all, all, all to the wind.

✪ JOANNA THOMPSON's poetry has appeared in the *California Quarterly, Descant,* the *New Quarterly,* and other journals.

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Nationalism and the Study of Literature

JOHN H. FISHER

Why do we study literature in school? Why do we not accept it, like architecture and music, as a natural expression of the culture, one that does not have to be analyzed and taught as part of a general education? I submit that there are only two reasons why literature has been studied as an academic subject. First, at certain stages in a nation's history a foreign literature may be studied out of reverence for the civilization it embodies, which is accepted as superior to the civilization of those studying. Second, when nationalism or some narrower form of ethnocentricity rears its head, the native literature is resurrected, refurbished, and reinterpreted as a means of defining the national character. I wonder whether we may not just now be passing from the first to the second stage in our study of literature in American education.

We could begin with Sanskrit, or Avestan, or Arabic, but the great example for us of the study of a foreign literature for the civilization it embodies is the study of Latin throughout Europe from the sixth century to the sixteenth. For some ten centuries after the Roman Empire had ceased to exist, its language and literature were the archetypes of what language and literature ought to be. Virgil, Horace, and Ovid were prototypes of poetry; Cicero, Caesar, and Seneca were prototypes of prose. Greek and Hebraic literatures were early amalgamated with the Roman, so that Aeneas, Ulysses, and Abraham could function almost interchangeably as symbols of man voyaging through life, and Dido, Penelope, and Ruth as the hostages he sacrifices to fortune as he forges onward toward his destination. But in the same Latin language, representing ancient and superior cultures, Greek, Hebrew, and Roman documents were amalgamated into the mélange that Ernst Curtius designated "the Latin Literature of the Middle Ages," which was studied not only for information and style but also for moral guidance and grace.

There is no question why this literature was studied from elementary school into the university. We can still read Plato and Cicero and the Bible with profit and delight—perhaps with more profit and delight than we read many modern writers. Nevertheless, the day of their primacy passed. After the Renaissance the cultural unity of the Middle Ages, which was founded upon this classical tradition, gave way to nationalism. Consciousness of tribal or national identity is as old as social consciousness itself, but nationalism, unlike tribal loyalty or xenophobia, seems scarcely to have existed in ancient and classical times. In an illuminating article in the October 1972 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, Sir Isaiah Berlin traces the emergence of nationalism to Western Europe, especially to the France which Jeanne d'Arc finally galvanized into united resistance against the encroachments of the British in the Hundred Years War, and then to Protestant England, whose beleaguered nationalism confronted the threats of Catholic Spain and France.

It is no accident that revival of the study of Anglo-Saxon came as an aspect of this nationalistic movement. Matthew Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury (1559–75), encouraged the collection and study of Anglo-Saxon documents to help to establish precedents and heritage for the new Church of England. As a result, the first Old English pieces edited

✪ JOHN H. FISHER is John C. Hodges Professor of English at the University of Tennessee. He was President of the Modern Language Association in 1974.

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were those which helped to justify the essential features of the Anglican establishment: King Alfred's Preface to Gregory's *Pastoral Care*, in which he defends translation of books into English, the Anglo-Saxon Gospels, a sermon by Aelfric rejecting transubstantiation. It was nearly a hundred years (1655) before Francis Junius published the first literary texts in Old English—the so-called Caedmonian poems from his own Junius manuscript.

But it was in the eighteenth century that nationalism emerged as a coherent doctrine in the conceptions of *Volksgeist* and *Nationalgeist* in the writings of the vastly influential poet and philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder. As Isaiah Berlin points out, Herder's thought was dominated by his conviction that among the basic needs of men, as elemental as the need for food or procreation or communication, is the need to belong to a group. With a wealth of historical and psychological examples, he argued that every human community has its unique shape and pattern. Its members are born in a stream of tradition which shapes their emotional and physical development no less than their ideas. There is a central, historically developing pattern that characterizes the life and activity of every identifiable community and, most deeply, that unit which, by Herder's own time, had come to be the nation. The way a German lives at home and the way he conducts his public life, German song and German legislation—the collective genius, not attributable to individual authors, that created the myths and legends, the ballads and historical chronicles—is the same as that which made the style of Luther's Bible. Human customs, activities, forms of life, art, ideas are of value to men not in terms of timeless criteria—applicable to all men and all societies, as the medieval church had taught and the French universalist philosophers were still teaching—but because they are their own, expressions of their local, regional, national life, and speak to them as they could speak to no other group. That is why men wither in exile; that is what nostalgia ("the noblest of pains") is a yearning for. To understand the Bible one must imaginatively enter into the life of the Judean shepherd of primitive times; to understand the Eddas, one must understand the savage struggle with the elements of a barbarous northern race. Everything valuable is unique.

We need not trace the impact of Herder's kind of thinking on the Continent since it was the development in England that lies behind the evolution of English literature as an academic subject. The effect of this cultural nationalism upon scholarship and publishing, as upon the production of poetry and prose, was immediately discernible—in Percy's *Reliques*, Tyrwhitt's *Chaucer*, Chatterton, Ossian, Scott. More to the point, a movement began in the eighteenth century to introduce English composition and English literature into the academic curriculum. This movement began in Scotland and in the dissenting academies in England. The public schools and Oxford and Cambridge, controlled by the Established Church and open only to Anglicans, pursued a classical curriculum until well into the nineteenth century. The rising merchant and manufacturing classes were, by and large, not Anglican, but Presbyterian, Quaker, Methodist, Baptist, etc.—descendants of the puritan dissenters of the Commonwealth era. These groups therefore had to establish independent schools for the education of their children. The curriculum of their schools skipped lightly over Latin and Greek and concentrated on more "utilitarian" subjects such as economics, political science, applied mathematics, English composition, and English literature. In the nineteenth century, University College in London and the Working Men's Colleges (which grew into the "red brick" universities) developed these subjects on the college level. In his *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1783), the Reverend Hugh Blair, one of the first professors of English at Edinburgh University, presented a moralistic defense for the study of literature that remains standard to the present day:

> In the education of youth, no object has in every age appeared more important to wise men, than to tincture them early with a relish for the entertainments of taste. The transition is commonly made with ease from these to the discharge of higher and more important duties of life. Good hopes may be entertained of those whose minds have this liberal and elegant turn. It is favorable to many virtues, whereas to be entirely devoid of relish for eloquence, poetry, or any of the fine arts, is justly construed to be an unpromising symptom of

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youth; and raises suspicions of their being prone to low gratifications, or destined to drudge in the more vulgar and illiberal pursuits of life.

Nationalism was added to this justification by the Reverend Thomas Dale, the first Professor of English Language and Literature at University College, London. In his inaugural lecture (1828), he promised:

> But in all my Lectures, more particularly when treating upon that glorious and inexhaustible subject, the *Literature* of our country—I shall esteem it my duty—I trust I shall find it my delight—to inculcate lessons of virtue through the medium of the masters of our language.

His successor, A. J. Scott, was even more specific in his inaugural lecture (1848):

> I cannot flatter myself that there is recognition in the public mind of the propriety of making the literature of England enter into the academic course, at all corresponding to what the language has attained for itself. [But it remains] that a vernacular literature is that of a speech and of a nation both yet living, and in whose life he partakes who is to study them; and we shall have completed our description of that whose place and function in the academical course is now in question. It is the utterance of the free action of the mind in its wholeness or concrete existence, under the conditions of the character and circumstances of our own people.

It remained for Henry Morley at the end of the century (1897) to make the most explicit defense of both the moral and the patriotic reasons for the academic study of English literature:

> The literature of a people tells of its life. History records the deeds, but literature brings to us, yet warm with their first heat, the appetites and passions, the keen intellectual debate, the higher promptings of the soul, whose blended energies produced the substance of the record. . . . The literature of this country has for its most distinctive mark the religious sense of duty. It represents a people striving through successive generations to find out the right and do it, to root out the wrong, and labor ever onward for the love of God. If this be really the strong spirit of her people, to show that it is so is to tell how England won, and how alone she can expect to keep her foremost place among the nations.

This was, of course, 1897, when the sun still had not set on the English flag. But leaving aside the moral chauvinism, how near to Morley's literary nationalism is that expressed by Solzhenitsyn in his Nobel address (1972):

> Art and literature possess a wonderful ability—beyond distinctions of language, custom, social structure, they can convey the life experience of one whole nation to another. To an inexperienced nation, they can convey a harsh national trial lasting many decades, at best sparing an entire nation from a superfluous course. . . . And literature conveys irrefutable condensed experience in yet another invaluable direction, namely from generation to generation. Thus it becomes the living memory of the nation. Thus it preserves and kindles within itself the flame of her spent history in a form which is safe from defamation and slander. In this way literature, together with language, protects the soul of the nation.

Solzhenitsyn's eloquent testimony sums up the historical reasons for the academic study of literature and also the American situation. For nearly three centuries after settlement began, we looked upon ourselves, and were looked upon by the rest of the world, as an "inexperienced nation." During this period we looked back upon European, and particularly British, civilization as Western Europe throughout the Middle Ages had looked back upon Greece and Rome. Quite naturally, since in the beginning our own literature was sparse and crude, we took the literature of our English and European forebears as our own. Our nostalgia (Herder's "noblest of pains") was for the established culture we had left behind when we came to these raw new shores. So Washington Irving's *Sketch Book*, so Hawthorne's *Marble Faun*, so Mark Twain's *Innocents Abroad*, and so the expatriate yearnings of James and the whole genteel tradition.

Because our national language was English and 90 percent of the inhabitants of the thirteen colonies in 1776 had come from Great Britain, English literature became our archetypal literature, providing models of expression and sophistication for American students just as Virgil and Cicero had provided models for students in France and England from the sixth century to the sixteenth. Until the 1920s no academic study of literature in this country addressed itself to Solzhenitsyn's second postulate: that literature represents the living memory of a nation. This was the conviction that had led England and the Eu-

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ropean countries between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries to begin studying their own literature in school. But we simply transferred their justifications at face value along with their literature, without asking whether the reasons for studying Chaucer and Shakespeare and Milton, or Goethe and Balzac, were the same in America as they were in England or Germany or France. American literature "out there" was beginning self-consciously and emphatically to assert its independence. Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Melville, Whitman, Cooper, and others were beginning to explore facets of the memory of the nation. Yet even in the twentieth century Frost, Eliot, Hemingway, Faulkner, and others had to receive their first critical recognition abroad, while our English departments stuck doggedly to their Pope and Matthew Arnold.

By 1920 this already represented a cultural lag. The United States emerged from the First World War economically and politically so strong that we could no longer be considered an "inexperienced nation." The American economy, American technology, even American arts in the form of jazz music and Hollywood movies, began to have a world impact. Culturally, we entered upon what Joyce Carol Oates has characterized as the "American Renaissance":

> As I see it, the United States is the first nation—though so complex and unclassifiable an entity almost resists definition as a single unit—to suffer/enjoy the death throes of the Renaissance. How could it be otherwise, since our nation is sensitive, energetic, swarming with life beyond any other developed nation in the world, the most obsessed with its own history and its own destiny? Approaching a kind of manic stage, in which suppressed voices are at last being heard, in which no extreme viewpoint is any longer "extreme," the United States is preparing itself for a transformation of "being" similar to that experienced by individuals as they approach the end of one segment of their lives and most rapidly, and perhaps desperately, sum up everything that has gone before.

If Miss Oates is right, we have passed beyond the stage when our academic study can be fruitfully based upon any foreign literature, and it must now be based upon what has occurred and been created on this continent. This impression is confirmed by the demographic and cultural changes our nation is now undergoing. While the proportion of the population of British (that is, English, Welsh, Scottish, Irish) origin still made up 23 percent of the population in the 1970 census, that was down from 40 percent in 1940, and from 90 percent in 1776. Those of German descent made up 13 percent in 1970, and those claiming origin from other European countries another 14 percent. But, most significantly, of the 204.8 million people counted in 1970, only 102.2 million claimed British or European descent. The rest were spread over the face of the globe, or else left this question unanswered.

Now, this seems to me the key to the problem of literature in American education. The 1970s evidently mark the watershed in our cultural emancipation, the decade in which the majority of our population no longer thought of themselves as transplanted Europeans. When a society is culturally insecure, as France and England were into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the United States continued to be into the nineteenth and twentieth, it fixes upon certain forms as being most acceptable, and simply refuses to acknowledge the existence of variants except as "error." For example, largely for geographic reasons, most of our early contact with the countries of northern Europe came through the northeastern part of the United States. Here is where we find the earliest large cities and through this region the new settlers poured into the rest of the country. Linguistic prestige always follows political and economic primacy. Hence, it was natural that when the monolithic U.S. doctrine of linguistic correctness was developed in the nineteenth century—when grammars were written and dictionaries compiled—they were based on the upperclass, urban dialects of Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. This meant that other traditional dialects were simply ruled out as inferior or "wrong"—particularly those of the South, which had the further misfortune of being the loser in the Civil War. We are only now, with the work of the Linguistic Atlas and the debate over the respectability of "Black English" (which is largely simply uncultivated Southern speech), beginning to pay attention to matters that one would think might long ago have been of profound interest to students of the native language. Simi-

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larly, the cultural strain of assimilating forty million non-English-speaking immigrants in the nineteenth century led the schools to establish a monolithic canon of English classics from Chaucer to Dickens, simply to make pedagogy possible. But what a curious situation—to have little Russian and Italian boys and girls in New York City and Cleveland poring over *As You Like It* and *Silas Marner* as the price of admission into American culture!

Our problem is not alone with the study of English language and literature. It is equally pressing with regard to the study of foreign languages. The problem of foreign languages is not the dwindling enrollments for language study in schools and colleges. Rather, it is the twelve million Americans who do not speak English at all, and the millions more who are scarred by the conflict between the dominant culture and their subculture, an essential part of whose difference always lies in language.

For example, 10.6 million Americans, or more than 5 percent of the population, identify themselves as being of Latin origin. "Many of us are not really bi-lingual but schizo-lingual," writes a lawyer, Enrique Lopez. "We actually speak an amalgam of English and Spanish that creates special problems in education. For every human being, the greatest period of learning is from birth to age five, and for the Chicano child, that learning is taking place in this schizo-lingual amalgam, which is mostly Spanish. This is the child's principal cognitive tool, but the day he enters school it is snatched away from him. You may as well perform a partial lobotomy on him. He's so severely traumatized that he may never recover. . . . When he's forbidden to talk his own language, he gets a terrific sense of inferiority and guilt. He begins to dislike himself and his parents and everybody else." And Professor Ralph Guzman adds that the person of Spanish origin has not only a language barrier but a cultural one. "The blacks have dealt with American society longer than we have. They can talk to white people easier. We still don't understand the white world, we still wrestle with what makes an Anglo laugh, what makes them angry, what this business is of looking people in the eye and shaking hands until they break."

I am not here advocating bilingual education and cultural separatism. The linguistic and cultural conflicts in Canada, India, and other countries today can only be described as tragic. So far the United States has been fortunate in having as its standard the language most widely used in the world for intercultural communication. The non-English-speaking immigrants who by 1940 had come to make up a majority of our population were both generous and wise in accepting English as their native language. Many of the most accomplished masters of political, literary, technical, and business English today are from non-English-speaking backgrounds. It is to be hoped that future waves of immigrants will make the same concession, and that the trauma of their acculturation will not lead to a weakening of this national asset. Any child in school or student in the university who is not given command of the national language is being cheated of the most valuable part of his or her education.

Yet to say that we are fortunate that our national language is English does not settle the question of what literature we are to study. The alienation from Anglo-Saxon and European culture, if we read the 1970 census aright, is now shared by some 50 percent of the American population. Both English departments and foreign language departments have their work cut out for them if they are to face the real issues of literature in American education during the last quarter of the twentieth century. Of course, they can go on purveying the comfortable certitudes of the great European tradition, and these will always find their takers. Since 1940 there have been dramatic developments in the study of American literature. It is now possible to elect an Americanist department chairman, and the Modern Language Association has, for the first time in its history, appointed a specialist in modern American literature as its Executive Director. The emergence of American Studies, Black Literature, and other cultural and ethnic programs points up the same tendency. Whether we wish it or not, the movement is moving. Yet it remains largely unaccredited and peripheral. The historical and critical study of British and European literature remains the core of English and foreign language undergraduate and graduate major programs. Although an increasing number of scholars are now addressing themselves to aspects of American litera-

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ture, to critical theory, and to international trends in contemporary literature, few are addressing themselves to the evolution of the American experience, immigration, slavery, the frontier, the farm, and the city. The big issues of race and class and creed are still not regarded as appropriate for departments of literature. This is the stuff of the police blotter, of dissent, of confrontation. But it is also the stuff of novels, poems, and plays. It is just the sort of experience and emotion that we painstakingly dissect in Sophocles, Dante, and Shakespeare. Must we leave its appearance in American culture to the sociologists and anthropologists? Is there no way for the student of literature to grapple, in his own culture, with the same sorts of tensions and realities that are the stuff of his elucidation of earlier literature?

This, then, appears to me to be the real situation in the study of literature in American education. No longer can it be simply to transmit the riches of the European tradition to an inexperienced nation. It must begin to reckon with our obsessive concern for our own history and our own destiny. This concern is perhaps 25 percent Anglo-Saxon and another 25 percent European; the other 50 percent is heaven knows what. But it is this very amalgam that is today seeking desperately to discover its roots. The challenge to the academic study of literature—as indeed of all the humanistic subjects—is to discover a perspective and a canon that can comprehend all our antecedents—English, European, African, Asian—while at the same time illuminating the rich fabric of our own cultural and aesthetic experience.

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Sacra ac Profana
The Art of Swearing in Latin

EDWARD C. ECHOLS

All peoples, past and present, civilized and barbarian, share at least one thing in common: when the need arises, or the humor is upon them, they swear. The oath asseverative, the oath interjectional, and the oath denunciatory—however socially deplored and often officially suppressed—are fundamental both to the origin of language and to the continued existence of organized society.

The dark side of swearing—the oath interjectional, the oath profane—is intimately involved with the origin of oral communication. The famed linguist E. H. Sturtevant has noted: "The exclamatory parts of a language, like many animal cries, are characterized by extreme variations in pitch and loudness. This fact, added to the simplicity of the situations that induce them, makes them easier to understand. There is abundant evidence to show that the expression of emotion by gesture, facial expression and voice, or by any of them alone, is immediately intelligible." And it is true. Any nonspeaker of Italian who has managed successfully to rebuff a Neapolitan pen vendor will ruefully attest to Sturtevant's observations.

Man's initial attempts at communication were surely by way of the swear sounds favored by all recorded cursing cultures: the palatal plosives, varied and reinforced by the labial and dental plosives, plus the gingival spirants, the compounded labiodentals, and the totally rewarding unvoiced glottal fricatives. Clearly, then, in swearing it is the cacophony of the end product that counts, not mutual recognition of actual meaning. "By George!" is potentially no more effective in a mild swearing situation than "Bicuspid!" or "Bifocal!" It is only more familiar and therefore more comfortable. Since meaning in swearing is clearly of secondary importance, whenever someone is seized by an uncontrollable desire to give oral expression to his visceral emotions, it is essential only that the noises he makes will startle, shock, threaten, intimidate, stun, disgust, overpower—and ultimately clear the area for some distance around.

That swearing is indeed the most oral of all linguistic patterns is well demonstrated by an anecdote involving that constant user and acknowledged master of colorful calumny, Mark Twain. The master's wife, determined to shock her husband out of his profane practices, secretly assembled a lengthy list of his favorite oaths and one day suddenly read them all off to her momentarily startled husband. But Twain quickly recovered and said, laughing, "My dear, you've got the words, but you haven't got the tune!"

The true oath, the oath asseverative—"I swear by all that's holy!"—is fundamental to the origin and the continuation of human society. Sturtevant has rightly observed that such voluntary communication can hardly have been called upon except to deceive, so that language *must have been invented for* the purpose of lying. It follows, then, that as soon as Neanderthal man discovered he could deceive, and acquired a reputation for skillfully weaving a tangled web, the firm backing

✪ EDWARD C. ECHOLS is Morison Professor of Latin and Chairman of the Department of Classical Languages at Phillips Exeter Academy. He has published a translation of Herodian and a number of articles in classical periodicals.

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of something awesomely powerful was required for the acceptance of his contracts, his promises, his taller tales: natural phenomena, the unpredictable *ex caelo* ("from the sky") lightning, or a mutually accepted possibility—the tribal omnipotent(s), who were equally unpredictable, sometimes vindictive, sometimes vindicative. This *obligatory* oath asseverative the Romans formulated routinely, by the gods! A genuine oath, it involved calling upon their deities collectively or upon the appropriate individual deity, usually Jupiter as king of gods and men. Predictably the basic pattern, once established, showed little variation: *Iuro per Iovem!* ("I swear by Jupiter!"); *Iuro per Iovem et Mavortem!* ("I swear by Jupiter and Mars!"); *Per Iovem deosque omnes adiuro!* ("I swear by Jupiter and all the gods!"); *Iuro per supremi regis regnum et matrem familias Iunonem!* ("I swear by the realm of the supreme king and the mistress of his house, Juno!").

A second type of asseveration is represented by *Do Iovem testem!* ("I offer Jupiter as my witness!"), and a third type by the pious protestation, *Me Iuppiter non amet, si . . .* ("May Jupiter not love me, if . . . "). A favorite English protestation, "God knows," is exactly the Latin "*Di sciunt.*"

Proficiency in swearing, even solemn swearing, has always excited universal admiration. Plautus is our authority; there would seem to be no room for improvement in this rolling oath: *Ita me Iuppiter, Iuno, Ceres, Minerva, Latona, Spes, Opis, Virtus, Castor, Polluces, Mars, Mercurius, Hercules, Summanus, Sol, dique omnes ament . . .*" ("So help me Jupiter, Juno, Ceres, Minerva, Latona, Hope, Plenty, Excellence, Castor, Pollux, Mars, Mercury, Hercules, God of Night Lightning, Sun, and all the gods . . .")—to which the properly awed and admiring response is *Ut iurat!* ("How he swears!").

The mandatory appearance of sacred words in the solemn oath asseverative invariably produces an ironic paradox: making certain words too holy for everyday use automatically makes them prime swearwords. As Robert Graves observes, "The chief strength of the oath in Christian countries, and indeed everywhere, is that it is forbidden by authority."

Among the ancient peoples, the Hebrews obviously were frequent and practiced swearers, as witness the Third Commandment: "Thou shalt not take the name of Jehovah thy God in vain." Swearing must have proved a public nuisance in early Crete as well, for Rhadamanthus prohibited by law the practice of swearing by the gods, and offered as an acceptable substitute swearing by the dog, the ram, the goose, the plane tree, or some other such thing. (It should be noted that the initial sounds of the Greek words for these suggested substitutes were among those sounds universally favored for swearing purposes.) Such official efforts to outlaw profanity have always met with small success. At best a prohibition laid upon swearing by the gods has produced a rich and varied crop of what H. L. Mencken labeled "deaconic swearing"—bootleg profanity, the use of a sound-alike substitute for the genuine article, such as "Gosh darn it," "So help me, Hannah," "Jiminy Christmas," and the like.

Out of the formal and sacred oath asseverative come, inevitably and degeneratively, the oath interjectional and the exclamatory oath interjectional, which are true profanity. As the solemn *Iuro per Iovem!* loses its power to protect and persuade, through overexposure and frequent failures to produce the desired results, then the leftovers and spare parts of these true oaths survive as the oath interjectional—casual and meaningless surface noises bobbing aimlessly on the increasingly polluted seas of human communication. So we find in the Latin *Per Iovem!* all that survives of the once sacred *Iuro per Iovem!*, now little more than a casual emphasizer, just as the equally casual English emphasizer "So help me!" has a popular existence far removed from the still-binding court oath, "So help me God!"

In addition to the ubiquitous *Per Iovem!*, other fragments of original asseverations were in common use among the Romans: *Per divom fidem!* ("By the gods' credibility!"); *Pro Iuppiter!* ("By Jupiter!"); *Per Mercurium!* ("By Mercury!"); *Pro di immortales!* ("By the immortal gods!"); *O di boni!* ("O good gods!"), and many other such, including the ear-catching *Medius Fidius!*, which sounds as if it might mean "Fidius is the one in the middle," but is probably a contraction of *Me deus Fidius iuvet!* ("So help me Jupiter, God of truth!").

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For their casual swearing, however, the Romans seemed generally willing to restrict their efforts to three basic exclamatory oaths: *Hercle!, Ecastor!,* and *Edepol!*—at least in their more polite confrontations and in the published literature. It must be inferred that, in purely oral situations involving undue stress and strain, a large corpus of profane vocabulary was available. It is difficult to believe that *Hercle!* and *Edepol!* would have been adequate to express Caesar's reaction on that fateful day in Gaul when sixty thousand unexpected Nervii came roaring out of the woods intent upon doing harm to his legions.

That these three interjectional oaths are really deaconic in use is strongly suggested by Aulus Gellius: ". . . Roman women do not swear by Hercules nor the men by Castor. . . . Nowhere is it possible to find an instance among good writers either of a woman saying *'Hercle!'* or a man *'Ecastor!,'* but *'Edepol!,'* an oath by the god Pollux, is common to both men and women." And *Edepol!,* contracted from *E deus Pollus!* ("By the God Pollux!"), is itself frequently shortened to *Pol!,* which is surely deaconic.

The oath interjectional, virulent or benign, was certainly invented and perpetuated by man to provide an oral outlet, a safety valve, for his daily angers and frustrations, a reasonably acceptable substitute for an obviously impractical action or, in psychological terms, a sublimation in fantasy of a concrete antisocial impulse. In whatever form, the oath interjectional, the oath profane, is indispensable to living, both ancient and modern.

The third type of oath, the oath denunciatory, is the true curse, a malign wish reinforced by the strongest authority acceptable to both of the parties involved, from the primitive "May lightning blast you!" to the modern "Go to hell!"

Latin denunciations are of the two standard types, the "Damn you" and the "Go to . . ." The basic damning verb is *perdere* ("to destroy completely"), and the basic damning oath, man to man, is *Di te perduint!* ("May the gods destroy—i.e. damn—you!") —with the archaic form of the subjunctive strikingly attesting the antiquity of this oath. Variations on this pattern are minor, for all practical cursers recognize a good oath when they mouth it and are seldom moved to any modification or innovation. The vocabulary of swearing is as conservative and resistant to change as that of religion or law. Examples of the *perdere* oath include: *Di deaeque vos perduint!* ("May the gods and goddesses damn you all!"); *Hercules dique ipsum perdant!* ("May Hercules and the gods damn him!"); and the impressive *Ut et quidem di deaeque omnes superi inferi pessimis exemplis perdant!* ("Indeed may all the gods and goddesses of heaven and hell destroy you in the most excruciating ways possible!").

Roman execrations are also served routinely by the verbs *infelicitare* ("to make wretched"), *malefacere* ("to do evil to"), *excruciare* ("to torture"), and *eradicare* ("to root out, to destroy utterly"), so: *Di me et te infelicitent! Di tibi malefaciant!* and *Di te eradicent!*

The "Go to . . ." denunciation, in all societies, is remarkably limited in its specific destinations. The Greek regularly employed a single maledictory goal, the crows—the standard oath being *és korakas!* ("To the crows!"). The Greek phrase is borrowed not from the gallows and subsequent exposure, but from being left unburied, since Homeric times the greatest disgrace a Greek could suffer.

For the Romans, crucifixion was the greatest dishonor a citizen could suffer, and the cross was the designated denunciatory goal. The basic oaths denunciatory were *I in malam crucem!* ("Go to the pain-producing cross!"), and *I in malam rem!* ("Go to some pain-producing circumstance!"). The substitution of *rem* for *crucem* may well be euphemistic, suggesting that even to name the dread *crux* was to invite its application to the curser himself.

The equally painful adjective *cruciatus* ("crucified") is occasionally substituted for *in crucem* ("on the cross") without affecting the end result. A second crucifying adjective, *dierectus* ("stretched out and raised on high"), is used both independently, *Abi hinc dierectus!* ("Hie thee hence to be stretched!"), and also as an intensifier in the conventional oath, *I dierecte in maxumam crucem* ("Go and be stretched on a very large cross!"), suggesting the additional stretching discomfort of the procrustean cross.

And this is as far as the Romans chose to go in denouncing those for whom they felt no great affection: the pain and degradation of

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crucifixion. No doubt that was sufficient for both parties.

Regrettably, but understandably, Roman swearing adds little to the sum total of knowledge about universal swearing. One can only conclude that swearing among the Romans was as common and as casual as it is among all peoples. The swearwords they employed and favored were dictated by long-standing custom and tradition. A sophisticated and religious people, the Romans based their oaths logically upon their gods. Their denunciations, like all denunciations, involved some pain-producing circumstance; there is little to choose, in the end, among the crows, the cross, and hell. The oaths interjectional were a limited number of conventional noises, subscribing to the fundamental requirement of all such oaths: the sound must have meaning; the content need not.

Whatever the future of profanity, from the oath asseverative to the oath denunciatory, the past of profanity is remarkably circumscribed. Moses brought down from the Mount an incisive prohibition against profanation of the deity; the legendary lawgiver Rhadamanthus handed down to the Cretans a similar edict, equally forbidding. Sir Christopher Wren loftily decreed that the "ungodly custom of swearing" was "a sufficient crime to dismiss any labourers" from the building of St. Paul's Cathedral. General George Washington, standing foursquare in the most unpromising surroundings, issued formal "Orders Against Swearing in the Army," stoutly tilting a determined lance against "that unmeaning and abominable custom." The Greeks swore interjectionally "By Zeus!," the Romans, "By Jove!" Our own "By God!" is, *pace* Hamlet, like so much in this world, equally weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable. Marcus Aurelius indeed meditated accurately: "All things are now as they were in the days of those whom we have interred."

Apopher' es korakas! ("Be off to the crows!"), *Agite, abite, fugite hinc in malam crucem!* ("Go ye, hie ye, flee ye hence onto the painful cross!"), "Go to Hell!" Clearly in the vulgar byways of billingsgate, even those who know the past are condemned to repeat it *ad infinitum*, inexorably *ad nauseam*.

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The Gentleman in the Parlour

STEPHEN MILLER

Essayists are rarely served well by posterity. Their work exists in that infrequently visited middle region between philosophy and literature—not clearheaded or logical enough for philosophers, not complicated or imaginative enough for literary criticism. Their work, moreover, does not usually lend itself to the kind of intensive scrutiny that professors of English favor in their classes. "Who now reads Bolingbroke?" Burke once asked. Who now reads Burke himself, or Goldsmith, or Johnson (Johnson, that is—not biographies of him)? And who now reads William Hazlitt, about whom Edmund Wilson once confided to a friend, "I never could read Hazlitt—can you?"

Wilson notwithstanding, many contemporaries could and did read Hazlitt; his work appeared in the great quarterlies and in some of the major newspapers. For about ten years, from 1815 to 1825, he was much in demand both as a writer and as a lecturer. Toward the end of his life, though, he fell out of favor—partly because he made too many enemies (he was an ill-tempered man) and partly because he decided to devote about three years of his life to writing a four-volume biography of Napoleon, a work that brought him neither fame nor fortune. In the final year of his life, he was reduced to writing anonymous filler for the weekly newspapers while slowly dying of cancer of the stomach. In a deathbed letter to Francis Jeffrey, the former editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, which had been an outlet for much of his work, he notes, "I am dying; can you send me 10£, and so consummate your many kindnesses to me?" According to Carlyle, Jeffrey sent 50£, not 10£.

It is not quite right, then, to say that Hazlitt has been neglected. In his heyday he had many admirers—among them Jeffrey himself. Keats spoke of his "style of genius," and Lamb said that "in his natural and healthy state [he is] one of the wisest and finest spirits breathing." In our own day, both W. Jackson Bate and Lionel Trilling have sung his praises, Bate calling him "the most representative critic in English romanticism" and Trilling comparing him with Orwell. Yet even Hazlitt's admirers admit that his world is not an easy one to enter. For one thing, its very size is daunting; his collected works, in the P. P. Howe edition, number twenty-one volumes. Having chosen to eke out a living as a free-lance journalist and lecturer, Hazlitt wrote too much and too quickly. Many essays read like first drafts rather than final versions; many are larded with cultural gush—Hazlitt sounding like the narrator of a TV special on "Great Moments in Western Literature"—and irrelevant digressions, suggesting his desperate need to come up with the requested number of words so that he could send the piece off and get paid. Hazlitt's work is uneven, but uneven in often startling ways, some of his best passages standing side by side with some of his worst.

Some ways of reading Hazlitt's work are less rewarding than others. The least rewarding is the psychological—that is, reading Hazlitt's essays as clues to a deep disorder in the man himself, a man whom Coleridge called "brow-hanging, shoe-contemplative, strange." For many this temptation will be hard to resist, since Hazlitt can be regarded as the father of first-person journalism. True, he is very much present in his essays; we hear him talking animatedly about any number of

STEPHEN MILLER's essays have appeared in *Commentary*, *Encounter*, the *Public Interest*, and the *American Spectator*. He is currently resident fellow in journalism at the American Enterprise Institute.

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things: a painting of Titian's, an Indian juggler, a novel of Scott's, a famous handball player. But though Hazlitt is present, he is not writing about himself; rather, he is telling the reader what he thinks about something he has read or seen. When he begins to brood on himself and his own travails, his writing becomes flaccid, inflated, predictable. As Lamb said, Hazlitt's work is admirable only "in those places where no clouding passion intervenes."

The two clouding passions of Hazlitt's life were Napoleon Bonaparte and Sarah Walker. Sarah Walker, the daughter of a boardinghouse landlord, was a woman some twenty years younger than Hazlitt with whom he fell violently and obsessively in love—to no avail, since she rejected both his advances and his proposal of marriage. Unfortunately, instead of discreetly coping with the infatuation, which lasted for approximately two years, Hazlitt preferred to let all the world know about it. In 1823 he published *Liber Amoris*, a book composed of edited versions of letters he wrote both to her and to his close friends, as well as other material, all of which made him look like a scoundrel and a fool. Hazlitt's enemies (he had many) enjoyed lambasting the book, one of them calling it "the beastly trash of Billy Hazlitt." No doubt *Liber Amoris* provides fodder for psychoanalytical foragers. The letters themselves, however, which have recently been published by New York University Press in their unexpurgated version (*The Letters of William Hazlitt*, edited by Herschel Moreland Sikes), make for tedious reading, like most chronicles of obsessions. The intimate Hazlitt is dull and distasteful. Yet such are the wiles of creation that some of Hazlitt's "healthiest essays" were written while he was suffering intensely from unrequited love.

The other clouding passion calls for more elaboration. The son of a Dissenter minister, Hazlitt grew up surrounded by radical Whigs, among them Joseph Priestley, the famous chemist and political radical, who was his father's close friend. At an early age, Hazlitt saw himself as a defender of liberty and a scourge of privilege. Like Coleridge, whom he befriended, he was a fervent supporter of the French Revolution. Unlike Coleridge, he kept the faith—a faith that eventually led him to worship Napoleon, in whom he took such an intense personal interest that, according to Benjamin Haydon, he was "prostrated" by Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo. One should not expect considered political opinions from a man who was overcome by news of Waterloo, and Hazlitt's political writings rarely rise above the level of rant. "I knew all along there was but one alternative," he says in "Whether Genius Is Conscious of Its Powers?"—"the cause of kings or mankind. . . . And while others bowed their heads to the image of the Beast [the restored Bourbon], I spit upon it, and buffetted it." The tone is similar to the one Hazlitt employs when writing about Sarah Walker. Just as the beast Legitimacy destroyed Napoleon, so "the monster" Sarah Walker, he says in a letter to his son, destroyed him. When either Napoleon or Sarah Walker seizes Hazlitt's imagination, he moves center stage, strutting and fretting.

If Hazlitt's clouding passions mar many of his essays, they rarely damage them beyond repair. These passions, in fact, work in mysterious ways. Suddenly, in the midst of an essay, the cloud comes and Hazlitt begins to rant, indulging in fuzzy and querulous reverie. Just as suddenly, in the same essay, the cloud passes and Hazlitt forgets about himself, engaging in exuberant and acute reflection. Perhaps because Hazlitt often found himself moving from moments of self-absorption to moments of self-forgetfulness, he was preoccupied with the relation between man's egotism and the artist's unselfconscious absorption in the process of creating a work of art. In many essays, no matter what the ostensible subject, Hazlitt wrestles with the difficult notion that the greatest imaginations are peculiarly negative—a notion that Keats, who was very much influenced by Hazlitt, formulated as "negative capability." According to Hazlitt, Shakespeare is the best example of such a genius—a man who "was the least of an egotist that it was possible to be," a man who "had only to think of any thing in order to become that thing." Hazlitt calls this ability "sympathy"; such "sympathetic" artists, Hazlitt says, create works of art that possess "gusto," by which he meant a certain richness and density of being—or, in modern critical parlance, resonance. Hazlitt's rather imprecise terms, though, do not do justice to the brilliance of his scattered reflections on the act of creation.

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Oxford University Press

On the Literary Stage

Shakespeare
The Globe and the World
S. Schoenbaum

Based on a major exhibition mounted by the Folger Shakespeare Library, this book displays rare and often unique books and manuscripts, works of art, costumes, scene designs, journals, and other memorabilia illustrating Shakespeare's career and impact. Schoenbaum's text discusses Shakespeare's continuing cultural inspiration, offers a view of Shakespeare in his own age, and talks about the plays in terms of the illustrations included in the book, which will serve as the catalogue for the exhibition as it travels throughout the U.S. over the next two years. *208 pp., 165 color illus., 175 black and white, $9.95 paper / $24.95 cloth*

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But Hazlitt's intellectual preoccupations should not be explained only by looking at the peculiar quirks of his character. To a great degree they were the preoccupations of the age, one in which epistemology and literary theory were closely related fields of inquiry. Hazlitt began his career as a philosopher; and in his first book, *An Essay on the Principles of Human Action*, he tried to wed epistemology to ideas of progress and liberty, attempting to connect the cognitive functions of the mind with its moral and expressive functions. Although Hazlitt gave up philosophy, acknowledging that "I have no head for arrangement," he remained very much the philosophical critic of literature and art. Not content to let his extraordinarily acute sensibility simply register his appreciation of great works of literature and art, he preferred to meditate on what he read or saw, groping his way toward some clarifying generalizations.

The writer whom Hazlitt frequently meditated about was Wordsworth. One of the first critics to champion Wordsworth's poetry, Hazlitt called him "the most original poet now living." Yet Wordsworth's poetry troubled him—not, though, because he disliked Wordsworth's conversion to Legitimacy. Rarely did Hazlitt let his own political views, intense though they were, cloud his appreciation of literature. He despised the politics of Burke and Scott, yet he considered Burke the greatest English prose stylist and Scott the best contemporary English novelist. Wordsworth's poetry suffers, Hazlitt implies, from being the work of someone who "lives in the busy solitude of his own heart; in the deep silence of thought." Although he praises Wordsworth for his subtle and profound thoughts, he complains that the "current of his feelings is deep, but narrow." Wordsworth is a genius, but one who lacks a sympathetic imagination, a genius whose "imagination lends life and feeling only to the 'bare trees and mountains bare.'" "The power of his mind," Hazlitt says, "preys upon itself."

The last observation is more compliment than criticism, since power is an honorific word in Hazlitt's critical vocabulary, standing for the intense emotional and intellectual energy that goes into the making of all great art—an energy that is mysterious, since nothing in an artist's life explains why he has it. Yeats, I think, is making much the same point about the concentration required for imaginative power when, in the third stanza of "Long-legged Fly," he describes Michelangelo at work in the Sistine Chapel:

> With no more sound than the mice make
> His hand moves to and fro.
> Like a long-legged fly upon the stream
> His mind moves upon silence.

Like Yeats, Hazlitt regards artistic power as one with other kinds of power, so that in "The Indian Jugglers" he speaks of the power of a great mathematician.

Yet Hazlitt differs from Yeats in one significant way: the political radical in him is disturbed by a connection he sees between the power of the imagination and the power of tyranny. The imagination is an aristocratic faculty, he says in an essay on *Coriolanus*, and "poetry is a very anti-levelling principle." In a letter to a writer who had taken issue with these remarks, Hazlitt adds, "Do you mean to deny that there is any thing imposing to the imagination in power, in grandeur, in outward show, in the accumulation of individual wealth and luxury, at the expense of equal justice and the common weal?" The point is further elaborated in his essay "Man Is a Toad-eating Animal," where he says that power "dazzles the senses, haunts the imagination, confounds the understanding, and tames the will." Although Hazlitt betrays a certain confusion about the relation between imagination and power—at times speaking of power as something inherent in great imaginations, at times speaking of it as a force that overwhelms the imagination—there is a strong tension in his work between power as the dazzling spectacle of Legitimacy and power as the dazzling energy of creative genius.

In his intellectual biography of Hazlitt, *William Hazlitt: Critic of Power*, John Kinnaird calls this tension the animating one in Hazlitt's work, a tension he explains by discovering two facets of Hazlitt's character: the Boy and the Prig. The Boy is fascinated by power, especially artistic power, whereas the Prig detests power—or, rather, fears that it will prevent the realization of social justice. Although Kinnaird's prose is often pretentious (one of his favorite words is "dialectical"), his book provides a typology that is on

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the mark. Kinnaird, however, thinks the tension between the Boy and the Prig a fruitful one, whereas it strikes me that the two usually speak at cross-purposes. In one letter, the Boy suggests that great art, while not exactly amoral, cannot be adequately described by conventional terms of moral approval. But then in the same letter the Prig, as it were, takes over and says that our sense of the power of great art is the "same principle that makes us read with admiration and reconciles us in fact to the triumphant progress of the conquerors and mighty Hunters of mankind." Surely the passage enforces a relation where none exists. Many people are dazzled by a dramatic spectacle in the same way that they are enthralled by a mass political rally—Hitler and Mussolini both had a great sense of theater. Yet to say that the power of a portrait by Titian (Hazlitt's favorite painter) is akin to the power displayed in a mass political rally is using the word "power" to describe completely unrelated phenomena. If Hazlitt never clearly worked out the implications of his Puritan suspicion that art is a force in the service of reaction, his uneasiness about the effect of great art prevented him from subscribing to the notion that art is a force for the good. Hazlitt never joined the church of culture.

The Boy and the Prig, then, are in perpetual conflict—reconciled, perhaps, only in their worship of Napoleon, who in Hazlitt's mind stands both for imaginative genius and political radicalism, though toward the end of his life Hazlitt was forced to admit that Napoleon was not exactly a great champion of liberty. "I thought all the world agreed with me," he says defensively in a letter to his publisher, "that Buonaparte was better than the Bourbons or that a tyrant was better than tyranny." Perhaps the best gloss on the tension between the Boy and the Prig is Hazlitt's own remark that "our life does not hang together—but straggling, disjointed, winds its slow length along. . . . We seem many beings in one, and cast the slough of our existence daily."

Hazlitt's essays are often "many beings in one," as even he himself admitted—lamenting in "The Indian Jugglers" that "it is as much as I can manage to keep the thread of one discourse clear and unentangled." Yet if we pay too much attention to these discordances we may lose sight of Hazlitt's distinctive strengths: the range of his interests and the quality of his prose style. Keats spoke of Hazlitt's "depth of taste." That taste informs his work as a literary critic, one who was consistently right about the talents of his contemporaries; and it informs his work as an art critic, one who offers us discriminating remarks about a number of painters, especially Titian, Rembrandt, Correggio, Hogarth, and Reynolds. Perhaps the interest in art is to be expected from someone who spent several years of his life trying to be a painter. But nothing in Hazlitt's life prepares us for the scope of *The Spirit of the Age*, a book comprising twenty-five sketches of the leading philosophers, poets, essayists, and politicians of the time including perceptive essays on Bentham, Scott, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Lamb, Byron, Malthus, and Godwin. Can we imagine a contemporary writer capable of putting together a collection of intelligent essays on, say, John Rawls, Saul Bellow, Wallace Stevens, Robert Lowell, Edmund Wilson, W. H. Auden, Robert Heilbroner, and Hannah Arendt—to pick a rough equivalent of Hazlitt's luminaries?

But Hazlitt is more than an intellectual journalist who can deal with a wide range of writers. He is also a moral essayist, a writer steeped in what Hazlitt himself called the French tradition of "morale observatrice." His work in this vein is not so powerful as that of Montaigne or La Rochefoucauld, two of his favorite writers, but it is rich in mordant observations about the peculiarities and perversities of human conduct. All his work, in fact, is shot through with telling aphorisms. Reading him, as Virginia Woolf said, "we are constantly plucked at by sayings that we would like to put by to examine later."

As a moral essayist, Hazlitt resembles Samuel Johnson, though he regarded Johnson's Latinate style with distaste, arguing—wrongly, I think—that it lacked discrimination, selection, and variety. Both had intellectual fierceness and emotional intensity, and both were very suspicious of hymns to rural life. "Vanity and luxury," Hazlitt says in an essay debunking the sentimentalities of Wordsworth's "The Excursion," "are the civilizers of the world, and sweeteners of human life. Without objects either of pleasure or action, it grows harsh and crabbed: the mind

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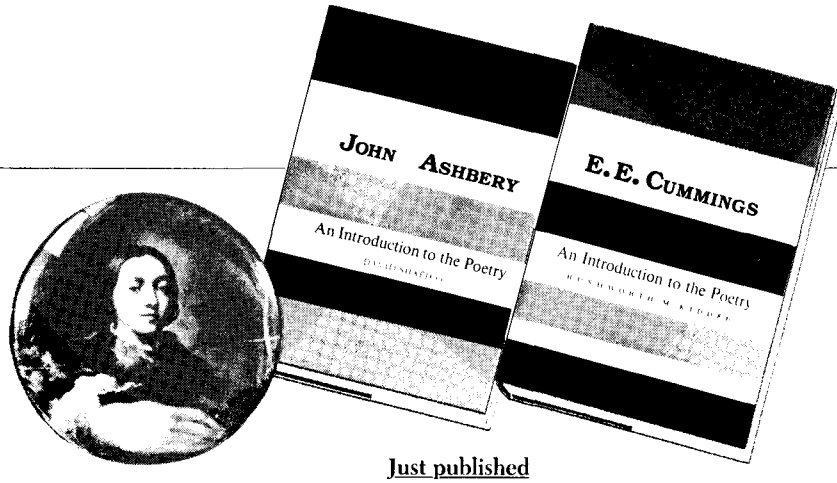

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becomes stagnant, the affections callous, and the eye dull. Man left to himself soon degenerates into a very disagreeable person." The passage could easily be Johnson's, as could the following one that warns of the dangers of solitude and introspection. "Man, left long to himself, is no better than a mere clod; or his activity, for want of some other vent, preys upon himself, or is directed to splenetic, peevish dislikes, or vexatious, harassing persecutions of others." Hazlitt was very much aware of what Johnson called "the dangerous prevalence of imagination" when imagination peers inward, not engrossed by anything outside itself.

The way in, both Hazlitt and Johnson knew, is the way to anxiety, despair, even insanity. Hazlitt must have suffered many moments of brooding misery in the course of his life, but his best essays convey quite a different feeling; they are perhaps the most exhilarating essays in English. They radiate a mental energy that also seems physical—the kind of energy Keats had in mind when, reflecting upon a field mouse he had seen, he says in a letter, "The creature hath a purpose and his eyes are bright with it." Hazlitt in his best work has a purpose, a subject to which the genial current of his soul (to borrow a phrase of his) responds brightly.

By brightly I do not mean cheerfully but vividly. Hazlitt's familiar style, as he called it, vibrates with immediacy, as if he has just rushed into the room to tell you about a painting he has seen, a walk he has taken, a poem he has read. Enthusiastic writing, heavy on the exclamation marks, can easily become tiresome, but Hazlitt's rarely does—perhaps because he is a very precise writer, his enthusiasm disciplined by his hatred of "pedantic and oratorical flourishes," by his dislike of "anything that occupies more space than it is worth." Take, for example, the following passage in "On Going a Journey," in which he describes the joys of not being known by anyone in the inn where he has stopped for the night. "Oh! it is great to shake off the trammels of the world and of public opinion—to lose our importunate, tormenting, everlasting personal identity in the elements of nature, and become the creature of the moment, clear of all ties—to hold to the universe only by a dish of sweetbreads, and to owe nothing but the score of the evening—and no longer seeking applause and meeting with contempt, to be known by no other title than *the Gentleman in the parlour*." Opening with a spate of abstractions, the passage might have become rant were it not for the sudden appearance of sweetbreads and the closing picture, with its touch of self-mockery, of Hazlitt as "the Gentleman in the parlour."

Hazlitt's blend of precision and extravagance is distinctly his own, but he developed it by immersing himself in Burke, the writer whose style he most admired. Burke's writing, of course, is meant to be declaimed; Hazlitt's is not. But what Hazlitt says of Burke's style applies equally to his own: it is "airy, flighty, adventurous, but it never loses sight of the subject; nay, is always in contact with, and derives its increased or varying impulse from it." The point is that Hazlitt's stylistic extravagance is rarely ornamental. The style derives from the subject, as when he says of Coleridge that "he has only to draw the sliders of his imagination, and a thousand subjects expand before him, startling him with their brilliancy, or losing themselves in endless obscurity." Or when he describes Samuel Johnson's strong fear of death: "A few years seemed to him soon over, compared with those sweeping contemplations on time and infinity with which he had been used to pose himself. In the *still-life* of a man of letters, there was no obvious reason for a change. He might sit in an arm-chair and pour out cups of tea to all eternity." In such passages, Hazlitt is dazzling. But, unlike other writers of dazzling prose, he rarely wears us out; and that is because he is primarily concerned with the subject at hand and not with the performance he is putting on for his readers.

"Well, I've had a happy life," Hazlitt is reputed to have said on his deathbed. But his life was not happy. It was a life full of disappointments, personal and political. His letters reveal a thin-skinned man often threatening to sue those who attacked him in print and a harassed man continually seeking more assignments in order to pay off debts. "I have not much pleasure in writing these Essays, or in reading them afterwards," Hazlitt says in "On the Pleasure of Painting." Worried about getting an essay done in time, he found it hard to savor what he was doing. Yet Hazlitt's remark is, I think, somewhat disin-

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genuous; he did take pleasure in writing because he took pleasure in being quarrelsome. And his writing enabled him to quarrel well—quarrel, that is, with style—whereas in his day-to-day affairs he was often simply obnoxious.

Hazlitt often alludes to his angry temperament; in "On the Pleasure of Hating," an apologia pro vita sua, he calls the ability to hate an admirable trait. "Without something to hate," he says, "we should lose the very spring of thought and action. Life would turn to a stagnant pool, were it not ruffled by the jarring interests, the unruly passions of men." Hazlitt is not praising the cold-blooded, "motiveless" (as Coleridge called it) hating that we find in an Iago, the hatred that partakes of envy and *ressentiment*. He is praising, rather, a spirited contentiousness—a quality that Keats also admired. ("Though a quarrel in the Streets is a thing to be hated," Keats said, "the energies displayed in it are fine.") Those who lack such a quality, Hazlitt says, are usually engaged in canting, in making commonplace and self-satisfied remarks. "Whenever any two individuals agree about any one thing," he says in "On Prejudice," "they begin to cant about it and take the echo of one another's voices as the echo of truth." Because Hazlitt does not want to appear self-satisfied or ingratiating, he seems at times to go out of his way to find reasons for hating. "Now I hate my style to be known," he says in "On the Disadvantages of Intellectual Superiority," "as I hate all *idiosyncrasy*. These obsequious flatterers could not pay me a worse compliment." Sometimes he is even contentious with himself: "We hate old friends; we hate old books; we hate old opinions; and at last we come to hate ourselves." But Hazlitt, of course, is exaggerating. He did not hate as much as he claims. In "On the Pleasure of Hating" the key word is pleasure, not hating; he is trying to provoke his readers—trying to prevent them from canting—by being outrageous. Hazlitt was one with Wordsworth and Keats in believing in the "grand elementary principle of pleasure," as Wordsworth put it in his preface to the 1800 edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*, though he would not have pronounced upon pleasure in such a solemn manner.

Walking was one of Hazlitt's chief pleasures, as it was for virtually all the major Romantic writers, who were prodigious walkers. According to Hazlitt, both Wordsworth and Coleridge composed verse while walking. Hazlitt's essays often seem as if they had been composed on the run: Hazlitt observing, thinking, recollecting—his mind working fast, as if it had to keep up with his vigorous pace. In "My First Acquaintance with Poets," he celebrates the walks he took with Wordsworth and Coleridge—above all with Coleridge, who he once said was "the only person from whom I have learned anything." Hazlitt praises Coleridge's brilliant conversation, but the two writers had already become estranged when the essay was written and Hazlitt hints at their political differences as well as the reservations he has about the nature of Coleridge's thought.

Hazlitt implies that Coleridge's thought smacks too much of a certain kind of enthusiasm. An enthusiast, according to Johnson's *Dictionary*, is someone who "vainly imagines a private revelation," but during the latter part of the eighteenth century the notion of enthusiasm had come to mean not only religious exaltation but any feeling of imaginative exaltation. Among the several definitions that we find in Johnson are "heat of imagination" as well as "exaltation of ideas." Coleridge, Hazlitt says in "On the Prose-Style of Poets," possesses the kind of enthusiasm that makes him "exalt every idea into a metaphor . . . expand every sentiment into a lengthened mystery, voluminous and vast, confused and cloudy." He also says that Coleridge is "not like a man going on a journey by the stage-coach along the high-road, but is always getting into a balloon, and mounting into the air, above the plain ground of prose." Moreover, in "My First Acquaintance with Poets," Hazlitt remarks that Coleridge's "long pendulous hair is peculiar to enthusiasts, to those whose minds tend heavenward." Coleridge's enthusiasm, Hazlitt implies, makes his mind tend heavenward—a bad direction.

Yet Hazlitt was himself an enthusiast, and he continually speaks of enthusiasm with approbation. His enthusiasm, however, tends earthward; it is a "heat of imagination" rather than an "exaltation of ideas"—the enthusiasm not of a man preoccupied with notions of the godhead but of one engrossed by Titian's *Diana and Actaeon* or by the style of

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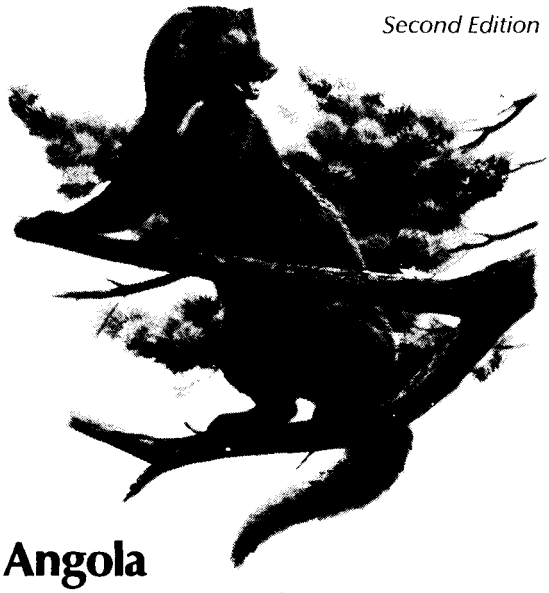

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Cavanagh, a famous handball player who "always could tell the degree of force necessary to be given to a ball, and the precise direction in which it should be sent." Hazlitt's enthusiasm enables him to pay homage to something outside the self, whereas Coleridge's is an act of self-inflation. Coleridge, Hazlitt says, "is swelling and turgid—everlastingly aiming to be greater than his subject." Even if we question Hazlitt's criticism of Coleridge, most of us prefer to ramble along the highroad with Hazlitt than mount into the air with Coleridge. The rambles are often instructive, but what makes them distinctive and appealing is the precise and, to some degree, self-critical enthusiasm that animates them. Hazlitt was most himself—and most pleasurable to read—when his imagination led him out of himself.

Reality Under Erasure

LITERATURE AGAINST ITSELF: LITERARY IDEAS IN MODERN SOCIETY. *By Gerald Graff. University of Chicago Press. $15.*

Reviewed by JOHN P. SISK

To put Gerald Graff's complex book in the simplest possible terms, one might say that it is a study of the epistemological consequences, since the Enlightenment, of the repeated discovery of illusion. Not that this experience is peculiar to the past two centuries—who discovers illusion for us more powerfully than Shakespeare? But unless we insist on making them too completely our contemporaries, Hamlet, Lear, Macbeth, Othello, Coriolanus, and Troilus encounter the disparity between appearance and reality in contexts that leave us in no doubt about the capacity of literature to keep in touch with, and make significant statements about, the world. Graff, on the other hand, must work with a time when "both the artists and the critics have taken as their subject the problematic status of their own authority to make statements about anything outside the systems of language and convention in which they must write." This is a time when it is quite normal for a novelist to say, as John Hawkes recently said about those writers who assume a mimetic relationship between art and life: "They must think that 'out there' is reality, which I don't think at all. As a writer, I'm not interested in 'life.' "

For Graff, such a statement implies a condition in which literature and the humanities are against themselves. It is the result of literary ideas—developed in Romanticism and Modernism and brought to their conclusion, rather than overturned, in Postmodernism—which have made the educational function of literature increasingly self-reflexive and amorphous and have brought literary intellectuals to the point where they define their enterprise "in ways that implicitly trivialize it." The continuity from Romanticism to Postmodernism is the consequence of the contradictions of the poetics of autonomy "which simultaneously exalt and estrange the creative imagination," as that poetics continues to act on its assumption that reality takes its orders from consciousness rather than the reverse. This, of course, makes much of post–World War II literary thinking sound as if the thinkers had gone to school to that perverted idealist, O'Brien, who in Orwell's *1984* says: "But I tell you, Winston, that reality is not external. Reality exists in the human mind, and nowhere else."

Marshall Berman, in his essay "All That Is Solid Melts into Air," remarks that "Modernist thought, so brilliant in illuminating the dark side of everyone and everything, turns out to have some repressed dark corners of its own." Graff comments on these dark corners in his own context (Berman's essay would have appeared too late to get into his book). He points out that, as literature is defined as only fiction "in a world in which nobody can look outside the walls of the prison house of language," it becomes ironically "once again the great oracle of truth, but now the truth is that there is no truth." In a paradoxical way, then, "mimetic theory remains alive" and literature "holds the mirror up to unreality," so that we are in a dark corner indeed. Such an ironic turn of events would have delighted Orwell, whose own fiction predates the raids on mimetic theory that have been launched by structuralists, demystifiers, deconstructionists, formalists, neo-Kantians, and the practitioners of anti-interpretation and nega-

JOHN P. SISK, professor of English at Gonzaga University, is the author of *Person and Institution.* His essays and reviews have appeared in *Harper's,* the *Atlantic,* and other journals.

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Howard Mumford Jones

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

In these pages, one of the luminaries of American letters expresses the seasoned insights of more than a half-century of literary and historical inquiry. The resulting work will be one of keen interest and value to all scholars and students of American literature, history, and intellectual development, to students of the history of higher education in America, and to all readers who appreciate a lively, thought-provoking, and richly anecdotal autobiography. Howard Mumford Jones ranges broadly and freely in this personal work, combining historical fact, reminiscence, reflection, and cultural commentary. In the final chapters, Jones summarizes the conclusions he has drawn about American culture as a whole. His perceptions resonate with the wisdom of experience and with that gift for independent thinking which he passed on to the successive generations of his students and which this volume continues to communicate. For all who share an interest in American literature and culture, this volume must be considered a rich legacy of a major figure in American letters.

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MERLE CURTI

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432 pages, $25.00

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tive hermeneutics. Surely, too, he would have been delighted with the method of putting statements "under erasure" as practiced by the French critic Jacques Derrida and his followers. Thus if one writes "~~God exists~~" he has simultaneously affirmed the belief and called it into question—which if it is not Orwellian doublespeak is the next best thing. This technique, Graff says neatly, "provides an extraordinary solution to the perennial problem of the modern sophisticate: how can I be sufficiently aloof toward all beliefs while retaining enough of belief to get me through the business of living?"

In Graff's view, Derrida, Antonin Artaud, Roland Barthes, and Alain Robbe-Grillet are what Frank Kermode calls "nihilistic schismatics" with respect to traditional humanism. But Northrop Frye and Kermode himself, "who defend humanism as a necessary fiction," already share the same presuppositions as the schismatics, who "conclude, with better logic, that, if humanism is indeed a fiction, we ought to quit this pretense that it can be taken seriously." We have a situation, then, in which humanism is threatened as much by its friends as by its enemies. The seriousness of Graff's charge can be seen in his roster of those who, in an "understandable but misconceived reaction against positivistic certainty," practice negative hermeneutics: Geoffrey Hartman, Harold Bloom, Paul de Man, J. Hillis Miller, and Barthes. Few of us are accustomed to thinking of such people as in any sense hostile to the humanities. Nevertheless Graff's position against them is maintained with balance and force as he spells out the consequences when the humanly created conventions of literature are accountable to nothing beyond themselves. The writer-intellectual—finding it convenient, as William Gass has recently confessed, not to believe in things but not to disbelieve in them either—easily becomes just another playboy in the Western world.

But if literature and humanism are against themselves, it is a mistake to hold that capitalism is also against them, as if contemporary commercial culture were a confident, stolid, and immovable adversary in the modernist tradition. In capitalism as in modernism "all that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned" (Berman and Graff reinforce one another in their use of the passage in *The Communist Manifesto* from which these words are taken). In a capitalist society the idea of fashion replaces the idea of tradition, and the revolt against tradition becomes profitable, becomes "experience," becomes Philip Rieff's triumph of the therapeutic. Marcuse and other cultural radicals, failing to take this progression into account, continue to believe in the parallelism of cultural and political revolution. Thus Richard Ohmann, allowing radical categories to do his thinking for him, sees "a sympathetic connection between the ideology of freshman English and the ideology of the Pentagon or corporation" that is thirty years out of date, now that freshman English and its teachers have been so markedly transformed "by the influence of the adversary culture of modernism."

Literature Against Itself is a lucidly written and exciting book. Considered simply as a presentation of critical theory since Romanticism, and especially since the New Critics (the subjects of a separate chapter), it will have great value, I suspect, even for its opposition. It is most important, however, in its reasoned and erudite advocacy of a new direction for literature and the humanities in which the connection between them and "recognizably central patterns of individual and social experience" is reestablished. The writers who give him most hope (Saul Bellow, John Barth, Donald Barthelme, Philip Roth, and Stanley Elkins at their best) are those who have some sense that the modernist revisionary ethos itself needs revising and are therefore able "to avoid some of the pitfalls of postmodern subjectivism."

Graff never lets us forget that the contradictions and cross-purposes of critical theory are expressions of the modern mind's irritability in the presence of the complex and the multidimensional, and of the consequent reluctance of that mind to accept the irreducible mystery of the gaps in our knowledge: gaps between macroscopic and microscopic, real and ideal, experience and theory, finite and transcendent, aesthetic and moral, reason and imagination. Contradictions offend us, yet we despair of complementarities. In the meantime we yearn for a final solution, a grand closure, a unified field theory—something, in short, like the autonomous system that the Modernist classic can be, at least while it works its spell on us. Hence the para-

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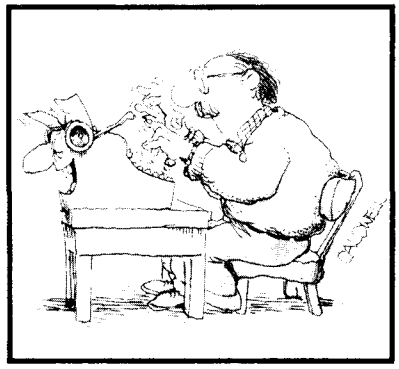
Comic Relief

Humor in Contemporary American Literature



Edited by Sarah Blacher Cohen. "The criticism of humor can be a deadly business, but this sparkling collection of essays—dealing with American humor of the 1950's and 1960's—is amusing and stimulating, albeit scholarly. Editor Cohen presents a wide-ranging overview, by 17 authors, of today's humor. Included are Max Schulz on black humor, John Vernon on humor in current poetry, C. Hugh Holman on Southern humor, David Ketterer on science fiction humor, Wendy Martin on Mary McCarthy's satire, George Garrett on WASP humor. . . . Sharp analysis is given to Nabokov, Barth, Roth, Bellow, and fellow comics. . . . Invaluable to researchists is editor Cohen's 12-page bibliography of critical works on contemporary American humor."—*Choice.* "A fine job."—*ALA Booklist.* $15.00

Chant of Saints

A Gathering of Afro-American Literature, Art, and Scholarship

Edited by Michael S. Harper and Robert B. Stepto. Foreword by John Hope Franklin. No other recent anthology of black literature, scholarship, and art has drawn so deeply from the well of black creativity as *Chant of Saints.* In its pages are fiction (by Ralph Ellison, Ernest J. Gaines, Gayl Jones, James Alan McPherson, John O. Stewart, Toni Morrison, Leon Forrest); interviews (of Ellison, Forrest, Jones, Morrison, Derek Walcott); poems (by Robert Hayden, Michael S. Harper, Sherley Anne Williams, Walcott, Jay Wright); critical essays; photographs; art; prose pieces. John Hope Franklin writes in his foreword that *Chant of Saints* "may well be regarded as a yardstick by which to measure the evolution of Afro-American literature and culture . . . since the appearance of *The New Negro* in 1925." Cloth, $22.50; paper, $10.00

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dox that so much postmimetic critical theory can be at once subtle, elegant, and exciting and yet so often marked by a passionate reductionism.

No doubt the enclosure of literature self-reflexively and demystifyingly within the prison of language is in one perspective a great act of clarification. But when Robbe-Grillet, in *For a New Novel,* takes his famous stand against metaphor and analogy in order to free us from servitude, terror, and the idea of transcendence, or when the "surfictionist" Raymond Federman contends that writing is merely a process of letting language do its tricks, the clear pictures that result can remind us uneasily of the clarity that goes with fanatic vision. It may remind us too that Orwell clearly wants us to see his O'Brien as both a sophisticated intellectual (indeed the very caricature of a literary modernist) and a fanatic—as if Orwell foresaw that in the post–World War II world to be one without at the same time being the other would be to risk demoralization.

Narcissists Need Not Apply

DUBIN'S LIVES. *By Bernard Malamud. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. $10.*

Reviewed by LEON EDEL

So far as I know, Bernard Malamud is the first novelist to devote an entire novel to a biographer. That particular walk of life has never had much appeal to novelists, although novels have pretended to be biographies (*Tristram Shandy* or *David Copperfield*), and in modern times Virginia Woolf, encouraged by Lytton Strachey, wrote a mock biography, *Orlando,* which was almost a treatise on the art. But biographers as characters are rare indeed compared with scholars and professors or novelists and poets. Perhaps the biographer is not a very good subject for fiction. He tends to lead a mysterious double life; one can't be sure whether he is himself or his subject. This makes many biographers seem insubstantial or invisible, for they hide in another's skin. Such, at any rate, is the received opinion of the descendants of Plutarch. And then too, like critics, biographers tend to be incomplete. A critic completes himself with the work of another; a biographer (some say) completes himself with the life of another. We are dealing, it would seem, with cannibals. Of a biographer it might be said that he is perhaps most interesting when he plays the essential role of sleuth; he does attract attention by discovering a batch of Shelley's letters in a national archive where one would least expect to find it, or by revealing some ancient bit of scandal, or by solving the murder of Marlowe—if indeed it was solved. Otherwise I think biographers are no different than their fellow writers, save that their special branch of history leads them into entire cemeteries of the dead, a world of phantoms whose dress has to be language.

Malamud's biographer lives with his own ghosts, not the ghosts of his subject. Lincoln seems to have been the interest of his youth, then Thoreau, and we find him at work on D. H. Lawrence. He is so absorbed in his work and in himself—and especially the latter—that one wonders how he is able to be interested in anyone else. Such a lack makes him a failed husband, a failed father, and a vacillating lover; we discover him submerged in general impotence, a crisis of middle age. Is he a failed biographer as well? Certainly we are justified to ask, What kind of a biographer is William Dubin? Malamud does not tell us; he treats him as he would any writer, although he refers to him as "the biographer" as if it were a special rank.

There are many kinds of biographers. There are the hacks who will sign a contract for writing any life. There are the publish-or-perish biographers, who write not out of vocation but to hold down a job. There are biographers whose subjects are a front for ego failure; one acquires importance by writing of great historical figures. The committed biographer, on the other hand, writing with a sense of art and vocation, is at once more extravert, more in touch with people and life, less obsessed than a narcissist like Dubin. A professional biographer embraces his way of expression through human sympathy and the gift of empathy; he is as committed to his subject as a novelist is to his novel or a poet to his poem. He lives for the doing—an ideal of perfection, of shape, and of form. Above all, he possesses a sufficiency of self to be able

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✪ LEON EDEL's most recent book is the group biography *Bloomsbury: A House of Lions.*

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to see his work as something outside himself and as related to a continuing order of reality.

Malamud's Dubin fits none of these categories, although he is clearly not a hack. However, he is so busy looking at others' lives that he fails to look at himself. He converts these lives continually into mirrors of the self. This suggests that his Thoreau is a very Dubinesque Thoreau, and he is so involved with Lawrence that he cannot disentangle his own inability to love from Lawrence's sexual passions. One of the characters in the novel, a psychoanalyst, interrogates the obsessive-compulsive biographer: "I could never figure out why a man of your disposition and temperament would want to get so many years of his life involved with a tormented semi-narcissistic figure like D. H. Lawrence. Thoreau I can understand for you, but not this fellow." I would suggest that Thoreau seems right for Dubin as a fellow narcissist, and Walden Pond had a splendid mirrorlike surface for them both. Lawrence is partly right because of his sexual narcissism. I know of no narcissist who has ever written a useful or successful biography, although narcissists are capable of writing excellent works about themselves.

"I write to know the next room of my fate," Dubin says in one of his more poetic moments. Most biographers write for other reasons: to tell a real-life story, to capture a personality, a character, a vessel of experience. Dubin has "given up life to write lives," and this suggests that he has absorbed lives to replace a life of his own. He puts it in a more enigmatic way: "Everybody's life is mine unlived"; he is saying once again that his own unlived life is in the lives of others. Dubin is thus a seeker of masks and mirrors. I can think of only one real-life biographer in recent American literary history who bears a curious resemblance to him. The late Van Wyck Brooks, a man in search of himself, chose to find his identity in a series of American biographies—Mark Twain, Emerson, Henry James, Howells—and I rather think he found himself in Howells. He was for years in and out of sanitariums; he had terrible depressions; his life continually crumbled. He tried to justify his sense of failure in the "failures" of Mark Twain and Henry James. Instead of accepting the life dilemmas of his subjects, he sought answers to his own dilemma. Without expanding on this fascinating "case," I feel that Dubin is a kind of Jewish Van Wyck Brooks—but also much less of an artist than Brooks, who had a feeling for the salty American character and a poetic style.

Dubin, then, must be judged a rum sort of biographer; he illustrates Freud's repeated warning to biographers against identification with their subjects. Indeed at one point Dubin is "devastated" to read in Freud, "Anyone turning biographer has committed himself to lies, to concealment, to hypocrisy, to flattery and even to hiding his own lack of understanding: for biographical truth is not to be had, and even if it were, it couldn't be useful." Dubin, in his self-absorption, cannot appreciate this. Freud's warning is against the biographer's blocking his own work. He explains this in his essay on Leonardo: all biographers choose subjects close to themselves, and the natural desire then is to remold the subject into the likeness of some agreeable figure in the biographer's deepest memories. Freud, however, also was aware that he had to face this problem in listening to the oral biographies of his patients. He demanded that psychoanalysts first be analyzed themselves so as to learn to analyze others. The lesson for biographers is obvious. The most successful modern biographers have been those who knew themselves before they embarked upon the knowing of others. Some come to this because they are intuitive *Menschenkenner;* others achieve biographical wisdom by accepting the modern therapies for "Know thyself." It is to be noted that Freud, in spite of his belief that few biographies can be "useful," singled out Strachey's *Elizabeth and Essex* and wrote to him, "As a historian, you show that you are steeped in the spirit of psychoanalysis."

Critics have already dwelled on the many fascinations of Malamud's richly humane novel. With certain shortcomings, it describes an atypical biographer, but in doing so it provides insights into the biographical art and craft. Malamud's instinctive grasp of the general nature of biography is never better than in a parable he may have placed in his book unconsciously to illustrate the biographer's dilemma. Dubin, shaving by a sunlit window, watches his wife in the garden suddenly performing a dance. It seems strange; he has never seen her swoop, dive, hop in this way.

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Has she been studying dancing? Is she performing a fertility rite? Is she imitating the swoop and dive of the birds? Dubin's mind ranges over many possibilities, but not the one closest to reality: she is trying to get rid of a bee which has flown into her blouse. The dance has been an act of panic. Malamud's fable is close to the experience of most biographers. How often do we speculate about motives, and find innumerable reasons for them, only to discover that the explanation is simple beyond words—a change of weather, a secret impulse, a sudden whim, a bee in a blouse! A poem is definitive, a concrete act; the novelist rules over his novel; but biography is a constant quest, a never-ending speculation and inquiry.

Le Fils du Roi

ALBERT CAMUS. *By Herbert R. Lottman. Doubleday. $16.95.*

Reviewed by FREDERICK BROWN

Had Albert Camus been able to continue writing after death, one would like to have seen him dispatch from beyond the grave something in the nature of a sequel to *The Fall*, a posthumous monologue on the glorifications and vilifications practiced upon him by his survivors. When he died, many people mourned the passing of an age in which the published word had often entailed mortal risks. For them he was a Bogartian adventurer who embodied to perfection the romance of clandestinity—an outsider whose work was a perpetual end game or the Sisyphus who, in his philosophical struggles with the absurd, had made intellectuality a heroic enterprise. For others, he was a traitor to the cause of radical dissent, a cold warrior, a champion of bourgeois compromises. His most zealous admirers were among those most likely to consider his death the timely denouement of a moral legend. His detractors, on the other hand, have kept him alive if only to fail him over and over again for having misread history. Now the stranger sentenced to die by bourgeois society because he did not cry at his mother's funeral, now the traditionalist convicted by leftist ideologues because, as Conor Cruise O'Brien put it, "he could not divest himself of his Frenchness; he could not betray his mother; if France in Algeria was unjust, then it was justice that had to go"—Camus lay in the eyes of the beholder.

Had Camus-Clamence, in a sequel to *The Fall*, observed that his mother was not a colonial power but a fragile, illiterate, half-deaf, impoverished *pied noir* of Spanish extraction, chances are the editor of his posthumous monologue would emulate Roger Quilliot (editor of the complete works) and advise us to beware of confusing the monologist with the author—which is to say that commentators of every stripe have staunchly impersonalized Camus when they have not substituted for him a persona in keeping with the ideological melodrama they wish to sustain. From the outset, historical circumstance favored this treatment, for when Camus first burst upon the Paris literary scene during the occupation, he did so in absentia. It must have seemed that *The Stranger*, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, and *Caligula*, which Gallimard received via third parties, had been conceived immaculately by a disembodied spirit dwelling on ultimate questions in some netherworld. Camus's situation was not of course unique, but his oeuvre became the uniquely efficient symbol of a generation without any temporal home, of a land evicted from history where, under censorship, the serious writer often disguised himself, labored in secret, addressed a remote public, and constructed his arguments in a timeless mode of discourse, falling back on allegory or invoking mythological prototypes. Not until the Liberation did the name Albert Camus become widely associated with a face, idiosyncrasies, an accent. And by then his persona had acquired a life of its own.

Historical circumstance apart, Camus as Clamence would have been the first to acknowledge his own contribution to the image he projected. His image was the product of an apprenticeship begun quite early in life, and begun for all the reasons that compelled a war-orphaned ghetto child to fortify himself against intrusion, to create a self seemingly devoid of birthmarks. Everything we know

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FREDERICK BROWN teaches French at SUNY, Stony Brook. His *Theatre and Revolution: The Culture of the French Stage* will be published by Viking in the spring of 1980.

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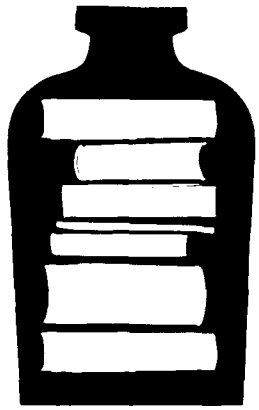
about him suggests that long before he discovered how much at home he felt on stage, he had established a histrionic distance between himself and the world. His irony, his gnomic style, his incisiveness and discretion combined to make him elusive yet give him presence, to define his ground with purpose yet hide the definer. Nor did what he wrote, when he began to write, disclose very much. Asking himself in *The Myth of Sisyphus,* "What lies at the bottom of this conflict, this fracture between the world and my mind, if not the consciousness I have of it?" he seemed, if anything, intent on clothing the actor-voyeur in philosophical stratagems, on extrapolating from history the origins of a need to isolate himself and of a nostalgia for some more coherent mode of being. Until he invented Clamence, no one could be his confidant, not even Albert Camus. Thoughts he confided to his journal, such as "Sexual life was given to man perhaps to divert him from his true road. It's his opium. . . . Without it, things come back to life. . . . A writer should not speak of his doubts in confrontation with his creation. . . . Never speak of his doubts—*no matter what they may be,*" tell us all and nothing. Far from being confidential, they are admonitions of the sort one might expect from a man beset with stage fright. The defective "I" was not to show through the impregnable role.

It is hardly surprising, then, that Camus used to call biographers "biophages" and that those nearest him made it their business to save him from public consumption. In view of the reticence Herbert Lottman admittedly encountered at every step, the letters and unpublished manuscripts never vouchsafed him, and the inherent difficulty of reconstructing a career as far-flung as Camus's, he has accomplished something quite remarkable. His book brings to mind the naturalist director André Antoine's contention that when the scene is set right, the drama "will unfold naturally, like a ball of wool unravelling." It documents in profuse detail the radically disparate milieux Camus inhabited during his lifetime (Algiers of the 1920s, France under Nazi rule, post-Liberation Paris) and through its anecdotal denseness conveys a sense of the chaotic *extérieur* impinging on its protagonist, of Camus emerging as Camus from a maze fraught with invitations to get lost in



THE ROLE OF MEDICINE

Dream, Mirage, or Nemesis?
THOMAS McKEOWN

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some cul-de-sac. No doubt Camus, that expatriate *malgré lui*, cut a peculiar figure among Parisian mandarins like Jean Paulhan, editor in chief of Gallimard, who thought him gauche for lecturing about moral commitment, and Jean-Paul Sartre, who judged him insufficiently committed to the moral immanence of the proletariat. But the wonder is that he cut any figure at all, that he did not end up, as would have been normal, a cellar man in the Jules Ricômes wine warehouse on the Algiers waterfront, without biographers to perform feats of detection in tracing his family origins. How, one finally asks, did he acquire the character to enter the larger world when tuberculosis offered him every reason to withdraw from it, and, once there, to hold firm against the manners and ideological fashions that governed the French intelligentsia? How, before he undertook his journey, had he come to consider himself, in his own words, *le fils du roi*—son of the king? All one knows for certain is that the "fracture" of which he spoke in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, though it cost him ease or familiarity with whole regions of himself, also guaranteed him his integrity. He could not help standing apart—a goalie in his soccer days, a director in his theater days, a dandy from the slums, an Algerian in Paris, and a humanist among Marxists. "In general, I like all islands; it's easier to reign there," Clamence observes of himself.

The biographer who has unraveled the plot of a man's life has only just begun his task. It seems to me that what Mr. Lottman has given us—and I say this with all due respect for his tenacity and for the abundant information he presents—is not the biography of Albert Camus but an indispensable source book for a biography yet to be written. While he piles all manner of incongruous facts on one another, as if their sum must somehow equal Camus, he shies from the challenge of elaborating an interpretation that would have obliged him to use his material more discriminately, to select each detail with the whole picture in mind. Rarely does he look backward or sideways or rest his eye upon a crag. Rarely does he transcend chronology and ponder what there was in Camus that went round about, that turned inside out, and stood upside down. The result is a narrative held together not by intimate patterns but by circumstantial webbing (who met whom when, where, and how). Each chapter follows its predecessor like an amnesiac, incapable of relating its deeper substance to the past. Consider, for example, this passage, which bears upon Camus's disastrous first marriage at the age of twenty-one:

> Later the couple told a friend how they had indulged in the humorous gesture of spending the wedding night apart, she at her mother's, he at his. Like their use of *vous* to each other, he supposed that this flaunting of conventions was meant to suggest that for free spirits marriage did not imply overfamiliarity. Indeed, they would always use the *vous* form to each other, and she may not even have called him Albert, a name he disliked. He was "Camus" to his friends, and they all continued to use the formal *vous* to him.

Lottman accepts Camus's reasons at face value and, like Camus, who after all had his life to live, passes on. The unconsummated ceremony becomes one anecdote lost among others rather than an opportunity to recall and anticipate—to do some conceptual knitting. Is it irrelevant that he spent his nuptial night not only away from his wife but near his mother, of whom he wrote in *L'Envers et l'Endroit* that "she had never caressed him because she would not know how"? Would the self-contained groom flaunting social convention not translate himself into the stranger, Meursault, who can't shed tears at his mother's funeral? And does this translation (assuming it is one) of nuptials into a funeral and a marriage bed into a grave not call to mind the observation Camus made soon after his second marriage, that "sexual life was given to man perhaps to divert him from his true road. It's his opium. . . . Without it, things come back to life"? One would expect a biographer to have reflected here on Camus's preoccupation with Don Juan and perhaps given us some notion as to why he began conjugal life by being chastely unfaithful. The biographer could then have evoked this night in his last chapter, where we are told that among other objects found beside Camus on the rain-slick highway leading to Paris was the manuscript of an unfinished autobiographical novel entitled *The First Man* (changed from *Adam*). Lottman would have it that "the first man" meant the first genera-

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tion French Algerian, but for Camus it was a more deeply resonant title.

Lottman's interpretative diffidence extends from the life to the oeuvre. We learn about conceptions, gestations, and publications without ever being told how often Camus's works unfold in the aftermath of a death (*The Stranger, Caligula, The Plague,* even *The Fall*) or that this writer, who loved nothing more than Mediterranean vistas, created a whole literature of claustration. Here again the real drama goes astray in documentary thickets. To appreciate Camus's emergence as an advocate of liberal values is to appreciate the loneliness for which he bargained and the tradition against which he took arms. He was, *pace* Conor Cruise O'Brien, a deal less mother-ridden than those who beleaguered him with Marx and Engels. The Magna Mater from whose breasts revolutionary aediles of 1793 drank holy water before they trooped across Paris as one virtuous mass cast a very long shadow, and in mid-twentieth-century France still exercised such magic upon the French intelligentsia that nothing, not even (perhaps least of all) prospects of its own intellectual extinction, could induce it to forswear what she represented. Where Camus set store by his patronymic all the more fastidiously for never having known a father, his numerous opponents on the left, including above all Jean-Paul Sartre, rallied, when they did not succumb, to the ideal of collective rebirth. "Everything is new here, everything has yet to begin," proclaims Orestes the Saviour after dethroning Jupiter at the conclusion of Sartre's *The Flies.* Camus's rejoinder was made through Clamence, who declares: "In my world one does not bless, one does not distribute absolution. . . . In philosophy as in politics I am for any theory that refuses man innocence." Knowing how the innocence that sponsors brand-new calendars had traditionally sanctioned ideological murder, Camus called upon men to assume the burden and guilt of history, to live in time, to regard as dangerously evasive the prelapsarian future invoked by utopian minds. A world from which the charismatic non-king banishes flies was altogether too reminiscent for him of the world without factions that became state doctrine during the Terror.

Though one may quarrel with the genre this book illustrates, or assign biography a

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mission at once more and less ambitious than the one Lottman discharges, it is unquestionably remedial. There are, moreover, chapters—the chapter on Camus's death comes to mind—in which Lottman's deadpan, clinical prose has the grimness and sense of irremediability that emanate from first-rate intelligence reports or from the police blotter.

Take a Guy Like We

DECADENCE: THE STRANGE LIFE OF AN EPITHET. *By Richard Gilman. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. $8.95.*

Reviewed by WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD

"Certain words of a moral or behavioral kind, judgmental words, continue to insinuate themselves into contexts where they injure meaning and bring about confusion, since they carry with them a *previousness,* something once true, something . . . once applicable. There are words in use now that are no longer applicable." Thus Richard Gilman stakes out his mission in the opening paragraph of his tracing of "the strange life of an epithet." "Decadence," we are promised, is long overdue for a comeuppance, since it is one of those words (like "sin" or "goodness") which tempt the "hypostatizer" into making it a reality of the objective world, when in truth it is but a misunderstood and misused concept.

Who is to blame for this state of affairs? All of us, evidently. Mr. Gilman includes himself when, early in the book, he purports to lie down, then lets the word "decadent" flash onto his private movie screen and forthwith thinks of, among others, "elegant opium dens with suave, slinky hostesses . . . bathrooms with purple or zebra-striped tiling; Tangiers; Pompeii; a Black Mass; Turkish pashas in their playrooms; *Les Fleurs du mal;* a drag-queen costume ball; jeweled money belts; fruit-flavored douches and edible panties." He reassures us that "almost none of the images and scenes derive from direct experience of my own," but are creations "in the realm of culture, that dimension of invented or dramatized existence." But once he rises from his erotic literary reverie, he finds the whole business maddeningly irritating; after all, he's got a book to write about "decadence," and he suspects that it is "not the oblique, mauve-and-tangerine-colored, fine-boned, weary, subtly menacing, insidiously destructive, and enervating creature or organism to which so much recognition has been granted—that in fact it is not anything at all."

As these quotations suggest, Mr. Gilman is determined to be lively and engagingly unacademic about the whole business. He banks on charming and persuading the reader by his unesoteric common sense, by his refusal of hushed, mysterious tones or of a formidably philosophic vocabulary of understanding. This determination to be stylistically winning creates difficulties when he imagines a reader less complicated and more gullible than one supposes oneself to be. Two examples from a few pages into the book: We are told that the hypostatizer or reifier of "decadence" believes that it has existed in specific places like ancient Rome, Alexandria, Paris, London in the nineties, Berlin in the twenties, Hollywood, Fire Island. And he pictures it thus: "hooded eyelids and sardonic mouth, slender nervous fingers, and perhaps even a voice, one with a throaty, brandied sort of timbre. Is there any question about it?" This same gullible reifier, inhabitant of a world of clichés, then picks up the *New York Times* and reads that Senator Jacob Javits has castigated the "moral and systemic decadence that has led us to the tragedy of Watergate," whereupon the reifier believes, presumably, that it was decadence—rather than evil or corruption or Nixon—which was at fault. He is now ready, like Senator Javits, to castigate decadence "as though it were a badly behaved dog, or a kind of Pied Piper tootling us to depravity."

No one, I think, is inclined to judge Javits's merits as a senator on how accurately he uses language—we have come so far from Pound's insistence on the intimate connection of language and politics as to throw up our hands over a politico's words, and just look at how he votes. But Mr. Gilman's resolution to study the word as it has been "embedded in the thickest, most tangled linguistic and histori-

WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD teaches English at Amherst College and is the author of *Seeing Through Everything: English Writers 1918–1940.* His *Lives of the Modern Poets* will be published in the spring of 1980 by Oxford University Press.

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cal contexts" and as it has taken on "an ascending degree of murk and inappropriateness," demands that he produce, as contemporary examples of the inappropriate, remarks by Javits or by Mick Jagger which simply don't merit much attention.

The refusal to imagine an individual reader whose attitudes toward language and culture are neither deluded nor monolithic is revealed at a number of moments in which "we" are hauled into the argument in order to be reprimanded for our naiveté. I quote three examples. Arthur Koestler is cited on how primitive people believed that the person and the name are magically related, and Mr. Gilman says we still suffer from this malady: "It is very difficult for us to accept the idea that the existence of a word does not guarantee a reality, palpable or abstract, to which it refers." But it has not been difficult for me to accept that idea since the moment when, at age seventeen, I was exposed to an excellent course in freshman composition. "We" also have cartoonlike ways of looking at history: "In our minds ancient societies and civilizations . . . are always monoliths composed of tight sets of a few frozen characteristics. Egypt is slow, hooded, hieratic; Greece is open, wise, sunlit; Rome is harshly splendid, cold, finally rotten at the core." And we're no better on the history of our own country: "We may in America freeze the past in a series of tableaux—Washington at Valley Forge, Lincoln in his box at Ford's Theater, the doughboys at Château-Thierry." Mr. Gilman is against these sorts of reductions, but his own version of our linguistic, philosophic, and cultural development puts us back in fifth grade.

The book becomes most interesting and provocative when he stops clearing his throat ("and so there is nothing to do but plunge into those jungles [linguistic and historical] on its [decadence's] trail") and, in brief compass, surveys the word's fortunes. He finds that decadence (or decline) was invented by the ancients as a myth to explain why the present was inferior to the imagined past; he then considers briefly its relation to the idea of "progress," and—with the decline and fall of Rome as his specific example—finds that decadence became a scapegoat word for partially explaining what was really a matter of chance, of fate. So "the very success of Rome

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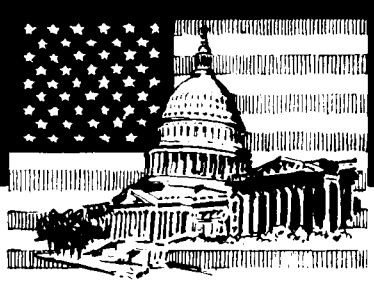

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led not to her fall but to the *idea* of her fall" (compare a recent book by an American political scientist called *The End of the American Era*). Then, in the book's major section, Mr. Gilman turns to nineteenth-century France, when it became possible for men of imagination to have faith in the fact (or idea?) of decadence the way one has faith in a religion. Central here is Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal* (1868) with Gautier's juicy preface ("the morbidly rich tints of decompositions . . . the roses of consumption, the pallor of chlorsis, the hateful bilious yellows") which served as its publicity agent. Somewhere between 1870 and 1880, "Decadence" became a proper noun and an adjective which was applied to personal behavior. Gilman describes Huysmans's *A Rebours* as "a blasphemous new vision" composed of "neurasthenia and sexual perversity; boredom combined with exquisite refinement; nostalgia for the corrupt . . . hatred of the 'natural.' " But insofar as Huysmans's work is highly literary, devised and willed in an elaborately "unreal" way, Gilman says that to call it an expression of decadence is much too simpleminded, while the despair and honesty of Baudelaire's spirituality lift him even further outside the net of decadence.

Moving to England and the 1890s, he notes Swinburne as the major carrier of the French "infection," since Swinburne promoted Baudelaire, admired Sade, and called Gautier's *Mademoiselle de Maupin* "the holy writ of beauty." But, says Gilman, Swinburne wasn't really decadent either, since he was aware of his own "inauthenticity" and knew that he was playing with sin and evil—as is suggested by the following amusing lines:

> Some singers indulging in curses,
> Though sinful, have splendidly sinned,
> But my would-be maleficent verses
> Are nothing but wind.

Finally it is Oscar Wilde who is the climactic figure, becoming the "representative decadent" and scapegoat for all respectable English opinion at the end of the century. One senses that Mr. Gilman thinks that if he can show, once more with respect to Wilde, how this way of talking won't do, he can close up shop with some final curses on the word's head. So he sets about with some energy, rendering Wilde for us in the following good paragraph:

> He was . . . the organizer and leading performer of a drama distinguished by its peculiar fusion of conscious and unconscious motives and by its having been made to serve as the crystallization of a cultural epoch. A great florid, self-appreciating personality (or so it appeared), he arranged the world around himself and reigned briefly over its consciousness, paralyzing its resistance and beating back its detestation through dazzling, prestidigious acts; until he miscalculated and the great flamboyant, but also adventurous, life collapsed.

Thus we are wrong to turn this rich, self-destructive miscalculator into the representative of decadence. But—and here Mr. Gilman falls back into the bad habit mentioned previously—presumably that is what "we" do. "Our need for clean, decisive dealings with history is satisfied by his availability as a cautionary figure and an epithet. Along with those familiar scenes of Roman debauchery (Fellini's *Satyricon* is the latest, most hyperbolic example) and images of Berlin in the twenties . . . the English nineties continue to provide us with our chief vulgarized sense of the word's historical incarnation." But I walked out of *Satyricon* because it was a lugubrious bore, and all that Berlin stuff in *Cabaret* looked to me like Hollywood, not Berlin. My dealings with history are usually murky and confused, and I try to appreciate Oscar Wilde for what he was, and not another thing. Whom, then, is Mr. Gilman addressing?

The book ends curiously, with its author saying in effect and rather loudly, "I *told* you so" ("Decadence is a scarecrow, a bogy, a red herring"), getting in some last taunts at the miserable, outdated term: "An epithet, neither more nor less," the refuge of "shallow, unhistorical minds." But the slightly hysterical tinge to Mr. Gilman's rhetoric works against him, forces the reader (*this* reader, not "us") to move outside the neat, rather boy-scoutish atmosphere he's set up for his concluding lecture. He'll show us once more why a word is merely a word, "neither more nor less": "A woman is not a 'bitch,' though we may call her one. Sexual offenders are not 'fiends.' Homosexuals are not 'fruits' or 'queers.' The Chinese are not the 'yellow peril.' " Have we not heard this lecture be-

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fore, from S. I. Hayakawa, or Alfred Korzybski, or Stuart Chase in *The Tyranny of Words*? Indeed the restless reader wants to ask the writer whether his own linguistic attitudes are quite radical enough. Are homosexuals "homosexuals"? Not a "fiend" surely, but what *is* a "sexual offender"? The trouble with where Mr. Gilman ends up is that—although he knows, as did Renan, that you can't banish a word, can't legislate that it be abandoned under punishment of mild torture—he must therefore abuse all the more violently "the shallow, the thoughtless, the imitative, the academically frozen," all those "monkey-minds" who keep on carrying around "this portmanteau stuffed with emptiness." But these people—Senator Javits and Mick Jagger, the writers in *Women's Wear Daily* or *Playboy*—are busy with various endeavors, none of which involves reading a book titled *Decadence*. It's not clear, then, just what the rest of us are to do by way of helping out Mr. Gilman's crusade. I suspect the answer is nothing at all.

Flunking the Future

MUSIC AFTER MODERNISM. *By Samuel Lipman. Basic Books. $11.95.*

Reviewed by AGNES CRAWFORD SCHULDT

There is little in Samuel Lipman's book to justify the title. It is essentially a collection of essays and reviews that are often interesting individually but chiefly concerned with nineteenth-century music and centered more on performers and their problems in the modern world than on new music. Perhaps this is understandable in an author who is both a concert pianist and a music critic for *Commentary*, but the relatively few pages he has added in an attempt to link the essays to each other and to the title are inadequate to the purpose.

Part I, "The Music," contains good essays on Schoenberg, Stravinsky, and Aaron Copland. But what is Rachmaninoff doing here, or Mahler, the quintessence of late Romantic melancholy, who died in 1911? Or "The Holy Family of Bayreuth"— Wagner's wife Cosima,

AGNES CRAWFORD SCHULDT is professor emerita of music at the University of Idaho.

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their son Siegfried and his wife Winifred, and their sons? Finally, a chapter on "Yesterday's New Music," published here for the first time, makes clear what was implicit in the preceding chapters: the author's belief that a verdict of failure is already in on new music.

In Part II, "The Performers," Mr. Lipman takes up the careers of Josef and Rosa Lhevinne, Vladimir Horowitz, and Yehudi Menuhin. He turns, then, to "The Performer's Predicament," the lack of any relationship "between the music famous artists perform and the music serious composers are writing." He does not see what performers can do about this, since careers "can no longer be advanced, but rather only harmed, by any association with new music." The constant repetition of old music, he believes, has placed too much emphasis on performance, with a constricting insistence on historical authenticity and technical exactitude.

The author's musical horizon seems limited to solo recitals and orchestra concerts. The nineteenth century was the first to glorify the solo pianist and the orchestra conductor; it provided both with rich repertoires, and it is not strange that pianists and conductors continue to prefer that music. But the musical scene of action is changing. While symphony orchestras still draw dependable audiences, the audience for solo recitals is steadily diminishing, as Mr. Lipman acknowledges. What he does not mention is that an audience is growing for music better suited to small recital halls than to the huge auditoriums that were built for the ever-expanding orchestras of the last century and used also for the recitals of public idols like Rubinstein, Rachmaninoff, Heifetz, and Horowitz. The best of that new music is written for small ensembles, wind quintets or string quartets or, more often, for new combinations of instruments or voices. The sound ideal is not the homogeneity of the nineteenth-century orchestra or the rich harmony of the piano but the clarity, the heterogeneity of contrasting timbres, one instrument or voice to a part. In the smaller halls of the big cities, audiences can hear this music performed by distinguished groups such as Speculum Musicae, the New Music Consort, the Boston Musica Viva, the Juilliard String Quartet. Across the country, university campuses are likely places to hear new music performed with style and delight, though perhaps Mr. Lipman, who finds academic musical life depressing, will not believe this.

It would be petty to quarrel with Mr. Lipman's choices and omissions if his book's title and his brief preface did not lead one to expect a thoughtful discussion of modern music and its probable future direction. The need to relate music to life and the world of ideas is pointed out in the preface, and so one reads on, hoping to find that relationship clarified in the end. The last section, however, is even more disappointing than the rest. It briefly surveys the recording industry, the dubious effect of international contests for pianists and violinists, the power concentrated in the hands of a few concert managers, the decline of philanthropic support for music and the rise of foundation and government support, the centralization of the musical life of New York City at Lincoln Center, the narrow professionalism of the Juilliard School, the limited critical press of New York, the competition of a pop culture "based on musics at once vulgar, temporary, and corrosive." Many of the situations touched upon deserve serious analysis and badly need amendment.

But is this the world of ideas? The changed music of our day comes not just from the exhaustion of an old tradition nor from new social and economic conditions of the concert world, and certainly not from an artificially contrived revolution of a wayward avant-garde, as Mr. Lipman frequently implies. The revolution has taken place in our minds; it has given us a new way of looking at the world. Creative musicians are no more exempt from that disruptive experience than are philosophers, poets, and painters. The most fundamental change in music has been the deactivation of time as motion, producing a discontinuity whose end result is the spatialization of sound. The appreciation of single sonorities, growing from Debussy through Webern to George Crumb, is possible only when time and movement are no longer channeled in a single direction from past to future. The open forms and interchangeable relationships of sections in a composition, common today, are less an obeisance to the principle of chance than a recognition that narrative, chronological time is no longer imperative—a point of view shared with novelists and dramatists. The widespread influence

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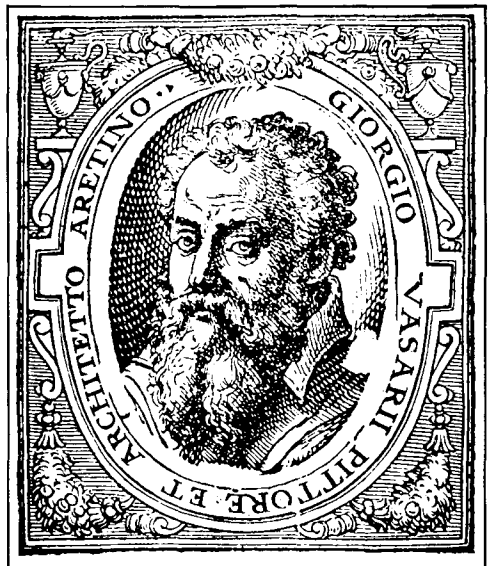
of John Cage was possible only because the old belief in an ordered world of cause and effect was shattered. One can ridicule the extremes to which the idea of chance has led, but those extremes will have faded from memory before a history of twentieth-century music is written.

Mr. Lipman fears that music is becoming, among other things, a handmaiden of mathematics and science, but he fails to mention the usefulness of mathematics as an organizing tool to replace the declining hold of linguistic forms. This change, too, is not peculiar to music. He decries the use of electronically generated sound but does not seem to have noticed that the challenge of the precision and range of sound possible with electronic means has brought out a new generation of singers and instrumentalists who have the amazing virtuosity to cope with that challenge. Since they combine astonishing control of pitch and duration with skill in improvisation—and add the charm of visible gesture and action—they have drawn composers back to writing for live performance. In fact there is, Mr. Lipman to the contrary notwithstanding, more collaboration of composers and performers today than in the last century. Nostalgically recalling a past in which composers were also active performers, the author ignores the considerable number of successful composer-conductors of his own time, like Boulez, Bruno Maderna, Lukas Foss, Ralph Shapey, and Gunther Schuller, as well as composer-pianists like Charles Wuorinen and Easley Blackwood.

Specialization has taken its toll in music as elsewhere, separating composer, interpreter, and listener, but recent practices are tending to bring the first two together again. The greatest loss musically has been the specialization of the listener, who now rarely has any relationship to music but the passive one of hearing the finished product. Mr. Lipman refers to the past centuries when audiences always wanted to hear new music. But those audiences were never large. The sheer size of present-day audiences for commercially managed concerts increases resistance to anything unfamiliar. Perhaps the answer is not to change the direction of new music but to return to smaller audiences and more intimate settings, in hopes of starving out the larger concert managements in the process.



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From his viewpoint as a concert pianist, Mr. Lipman is obviously ambivalent about the current musical scene. We read that "there is little doubt that music as a whole stands only to benefit from the collapse of the post-war avant-garde" and, on another page, "there is no urgent requirement for new music at all," since there is, "due to the prodigious gift of the nineteenth century, . . . enough music of quality and contrast for everyone." Yet elsewhere he deplores the performer's "parasitic relationship to the past" and the fact that audiences "continue their chestnut-worshipping ways, closely *followed* by their *leaders,* the best performers" (italics mine). One wonders how he measures the best performers and whether they are the best or only the most successful. He concludes that "viewed from the standpoint of the masterpiece, music is indeed in a bad way." But why should we view the present from that standpoint? The idea of "the masterpiece" goes along with the idea of the artist as isolated genius and belongs to the nineteenth century, the first to begin unearthing the music of its past. Surely Haydn and Mozart did not think in terms of masterpieces, nor did Bach. André Hodeir wrote that Bach's *Art of the Fugue* was made possible "by the infinite pains of a staggeringly vast number of composers; it marked the end of collective creation in music." Now, because our world of thought and the world of sound are so vast and so new, it will take the infinite pains of many composers to create the techniques and the ambience in which high new goals can be achieved.

Patience, Mr. Lipman! This is not an age of "creative emptiness," as you seem to believe, but of creative furor—and of course some aberrations mixed with the furor. There is yet no commonly accepted new technique for composition, but the century is not over. The seventeenth century, which most nearly parallels our own as the first of a new era, took a good eighty years to bring the techniques of tonal harmony to a first stage of maturity as a flexible language for music. Given the eruptive changes that all our minds and imaginations must adjust to, musicians have done well to produce a few great works and many good ones in our century. Given time, and good performers, they will achieve an audience as well.

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The Reader Replies

Irving Babbitt: Crusader

I am afraid that Douglas Bush portrays Irving Babbitt (Autumn 1979) as a wiser and more benign person than he was. Bush credits him with an "abundance . . . [of] common sense." This of the man who was almost paranoid on the subject of Rousseau, whom he blamed for a host of modern ills; who attributed Prohibition to Jeffersonianism; who, disregarding Whitman's idolization of Lincoln, said that he did not admit "the need of a leader who looks humbly up to some standard"; who, disregarding the Sermon on the Mount, said that "humanitarian service cannot . . . be properly derived from Christ."

Babbitt asked "whether in this country in particular we are not in danger of producing in the name of democracy one of the most trifling brands of the human species that the world has yet seen." Universal suffrage was dangerous because it endangered the "safety of property that genuine justice and genuine civilization both require." He wrote that "circumstances may arise when we may esteem ourselves fortunate if we get the American equivalent of Mussolini. . . ."

As for Babbitt's preaching of the law of measure, he argued that "when first principles are involved, the law of measure no longer applies. One should not be moderate in dealing with error." And as Edmund Wilson pointed out, "Professor Babbitt is always engaged in dealing with error."

To Babbitt, not only were Rousseau and the Romantic poets in error, but so too were the naturalistic writers whether French, Russian, or American, as well as Jefferson, Jackson, Whitman, Charles W. Eliot, Woodrow Wilson, and John Dewey.

Professor Bush's reference to Babbitt's "occasional failures in sympathetic comprehension" is something of an understatement.

Ernest Earnest
Gladwyne, Pennsylvania

Douglas Bush replies: Professor Earnest's zeal for his own vision of Truth hurried him along too fast to allow attentive or discriminating reading of either Babbitt or my modest essay. I did not present Babbitt as a model of benign wisdom; nor would one so present Dr. Johnson, although Johnson's particular errors of judgment do not annul the large fund of common sense for which he is justly renowned. Mr. Earnest can deplore attitudes that others see as greatly to Babbitt's credit, such as his view of the damage done to education by Charles W. Eliot (whose personal virtues he extolled) and John Dewey. He said repeatedly that he could not give rounded estimates of the countless authors he quoted (including that "great writer" Rousseau), but cited them as evidence of general tendencies which he saw, prophetically, as dangerous; nowadays "moral confusion" is a standard premise of writers of all kinds. But I can't pursue Mr. Earnest's catalogue of Babbitt's deadly sins; his letter reproduces unqualified charges commonly made in the 1920s and 1930s by automatic liberals—who could and can be as intolerant of nonconformity as automatic conservatives.

The State of Middle Eastern Studies

Bernard Lewis, writing in the Summer 1979 Scholar, makes assertions which I find puzzling. for instance, his claim that "until that time [Renaissance], no comparable desire had been felt and no effort made to study and understand alien, still less hostile, civilizations" is surprising, coming as it does from a scholar of his eminence. Surely, it will be hard to discount Herodotus' curiosity about Persian culture at a time when Persia was at war with Greek states! How will Lewis characterize the enormous efforts put into translating Greek treatises into Arabic during the Abbasid period at a time of continued hostilities between Byzantium and the Abbasids? What ulterior motives can possibly be imputed to translating Euclid from Greek into Arabic? Is Al-Beiruni's monumental work on India or Ibn-Khaldun's treatise on North Africa really devoid of the spark of intellectual curiosity concerning alien civilizations? These are but a few examples, from Lewis's own area of expertise, and can hardly be considered an oversight. Human history of different peoples and different times is a compendium of such examples, rendering Lewis's thesis untenable.

I hope Professor Lewis is not falling into the same trap of cultural chauvinism that he takes to task. A large part of his article is, sadly, comprised of innuendos not acceptable for journalism. I share his concern about the deplorable state of research in the Middle Eastern Studies in this country. How I wish his own article were an exception! The track record of Western scholarship in this field in-

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deed leaves much to be desired; for a recent critique I will recommend Edward Said's "Orientalism."

AQEEL A. KHAN
Alexandria, Virginia

BERNARD LEWIS replies: Mr. Aqeel A. Khan is clearly offended by my observation that Europe, from the time of the Renaissance onward, was the first society in history to undertake a sustained and serious study of alien civilizations, and quotes examples to disprove this observation. In fact, they confirm them.

Herodotus' interest in the Orient is an exception which inspired few imitators. As a distinguished classical historian, Arnaldo Momigliano, has recently reminded us, Herodotus was condemned and mistrusted by most ancient Greek historians, and only received just recognition at the time of the Renaissance. Al-Beiruni's work on India is even more isolated—a magnificent achievement which, however, stands alone with neither antecedents nor successor. Even less relevant are the translations of Greek treatises into Arabic to which Mr. Khan refers. It is true that such translations were commissioned by Muslim rulers, though mostly, if not entirely, executed by non-Muslim translators. They were written, however, in ancient Greece, not in Byzantium; they were concerned exclusively with science and philosophy, and were translated because their content was thought to be useful. Not a single translation was made of any Greek literary or historical work. It was not the culture or civilization of the Greeks which interested medieval Islam—only useful knowledge and methods which they very wisely and skillfully adopted and incorporated in their own intellectual tradition. The recognition and acceptance of science and philosophy from alien sources is not the same as the study and appreciation of alien cultures.

Perhaps the outstanding example of Mr. Khan's method is his citation, as a case in point, of "Ibn Khaldun's treatise on North Africa." Ibn Khaldun wrote no treatise on North Africa. He wrote a study of history and a universal history in which North Africa is extensively covered. In Ibn Khaldun's day, North Africa was already an Arabic-speaking, Muslim land, part of the world of Islam and, indeed, Ibn Khaldun's own birthplace. It is therefore difficult to see how his writing on North Africa can be adduced as an example of "intellectual curiosity concerning alien civilizations." More to the point is the treatment by Ibn Khaldun—one of the greatest minds of Islam and indeed of all mankind—of the alien territories to the north and to the south of his homeland—Christian Europe and Black Africa. To each of these—in a universal history—he devotes only a few lines. Of the Blacks he remarks on "their low degree of humanity and their proximity to the animal stage" which make them suitable for slavery. Of Christian Europe—in the fourteenth century—he shows rather less prejudice, but not much more interest: "We have heard of late that in the lands of the Franks, that is, in the country of Rome and its dependencies on the northern shore of the Mediterranean, the philosophic sciences are thriving, their works reviving, their sessions for study increasing, their assemblies comprehensive, their exponents numerous, and their students abundant. But God knows best what goes on in those parts. 'God creates what He wishes, and chooses.'"

Mr. Khan speaks of "innuendos not acceptable for journalism." He does not, however, specify and I can therefore offer no answer. His own remark that my omission of the points he mentions "can hardly be considered an oversight"—a clear imputation of bad faith—is presumably an innuendo of the kind that in his view *is* acceptable for journalism. The omission of these points is indeed no oversight. They are omitted because they are either irrelevant or untrue.

Islam is one of the world's great religions. Its followers created a brilliant and original civilization—one of the most vital and important chapters in the history of mankind. It is a tragedy that its image in the modern world should be tarnished by the kind of defenders cited and exemplified by Mr. Aqeel Khan.

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